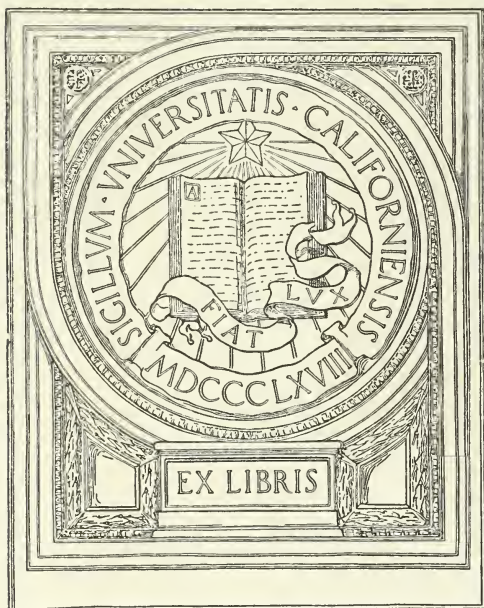


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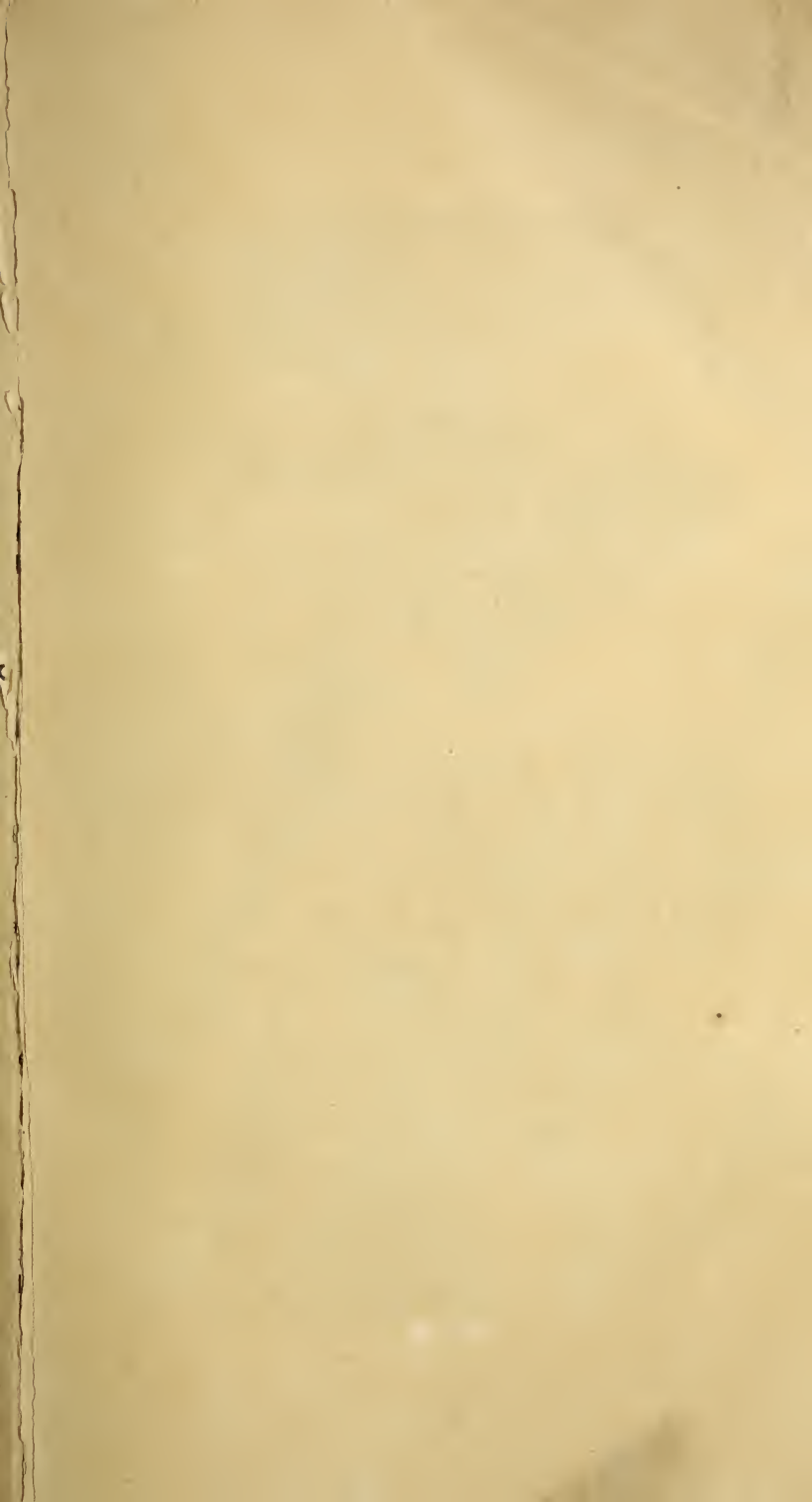
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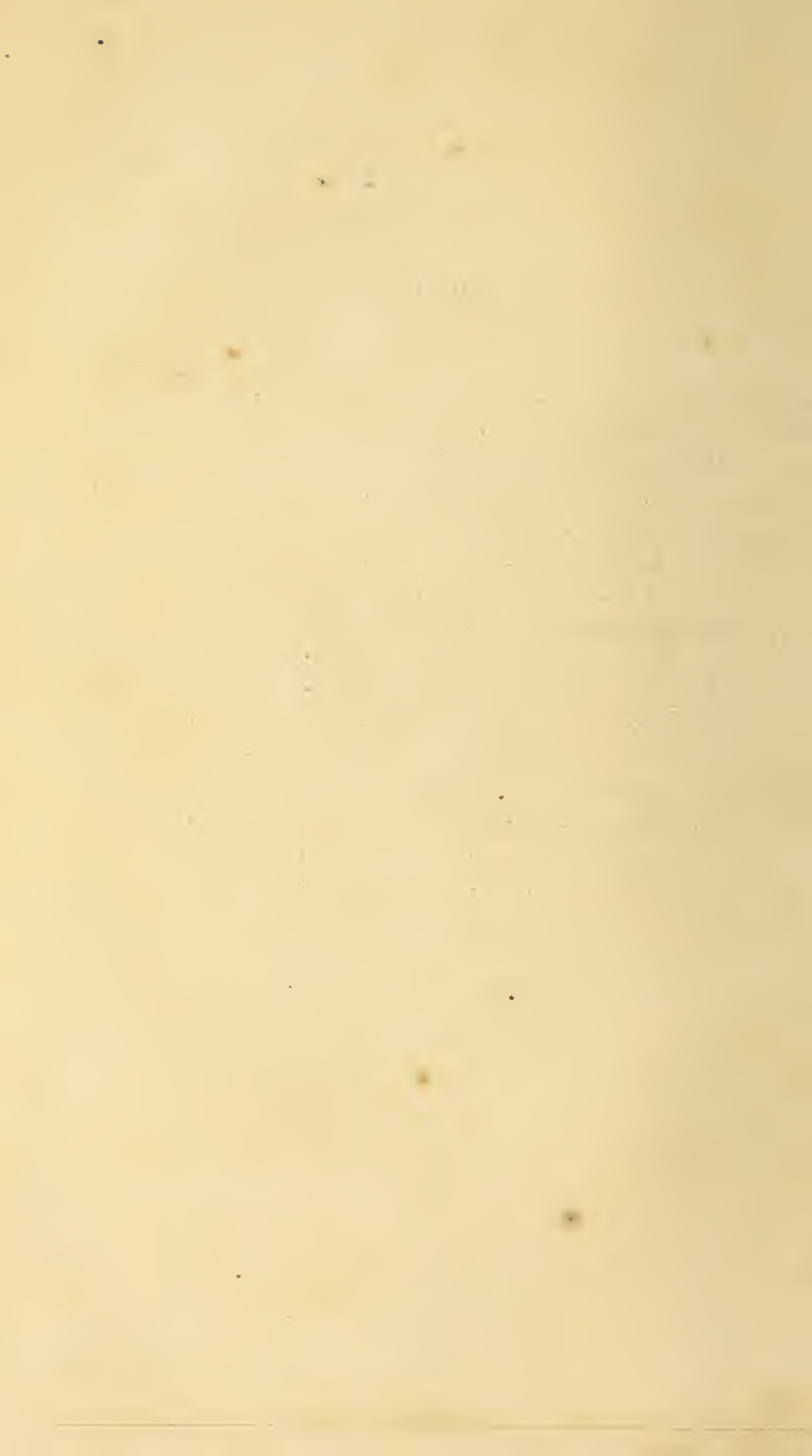
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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.	1
CHAP. I. HISTORICAL	5
„ II. THE KALEEKOTA CASE	9
1. THE GOVERNMENT	14
2. THE CIVILIAN	16
3. THE PLANTER	21
4. THE RYOT	28
„ III. COVENANTED AND UNCOVENANTED	36
„ IV. ROTHIE MURCHUS' RANT	43
„ V. PRICE OF PRODUCTION—INDIGO	50
„ VI. PRICE OF PRODUCTION—RICE	57
„ VII. THE SEPOY MUTINY	67
„ VIII. THE IMPENDING FAMINE	72
„ IX. INDIGO AND COTTON	79
CONCLUSIONS	88
APPENDIX	91



INTRODUCTION.

THE time is not yet come when it is possible to pronounce an opinion on the conduct of Lord Canning as Viceroy of India. We know to our cost that his administration has been the most disastrous ever known since the English nation assumed the position of sovereigns in that country after the battle of Plassey, but it is not so clear whether the misfortunes which have followed him ever since he set foot on the Indian shore are due to his incapacity, or whether they have arisen from circumstances beyond all human control.

It may be that at the time when he was selected for the appointment Lord Canning was the fittest man for the place who had ever been sent to India, and that his misfortunes arose from the rash and ambitious policy of his predecessor, who had sown the seeds of the whirlwind which was to overwhelm his successor. It may, after all, have been only one of those accidents that so often determine the fate of empires, and if it had happened that Lord Canning had preceded Lord Dalhousie that the mutiny never would have taken place; or had Lord Dalhousie been in India when it broke out, it never would have assumed the dimensions which the inertness of his successor permitted it to take. It may turn out that it was only the round man put into the square hole, or *vice versa*. But these are speculations which those only who come after us can fairly realize and appreciate.

So far as we can now judge Lord Canning's greatest fault has been that he has allowed weak and incompetent men to creep into places of trust for which they were totally unfitted, and that either from apathy or indolence he has neither dared face the unpleasantness of removing them, nor taken care to insist that they should perform their functions as even second class men can do when under efficient control.

His greatest merit will probably be found to be in the steadfast moral courage with which he held his own during the excitement of the dreadful period of the great Sepoy mutiny.

Even in the darkest hour of that dreadful crisis, no moan of despair ever escaped from Lord Canning's lips, no cry for vengeance ever found an echo in his heart even when the most atrocious crimes seemed to demand it, and no shout of triumph ever threw him off his guard or prevented him from taking the precautions necessary to secure the advantage which to others seemed complete. These are great qualities, and will go far to redeem the weakness, which though sometimes fatal in the ruler is frequently excusable in the man.

It is possible that he may be as little to blame personally for the mutiny of the Company's European troops, which was the second great disaster of this sort which occurred during his viceroyalty. The legal authorities may have been right in advising the Government both in India and at home that the soldiers had no right to the bounty they demanded and in advising them to resist it, and instructions may have been sent to India to act in accordance with these opinions. It is true, nevertheless, that a great man would not have asked the lawyers for an opinion in the technical construction of an agreement when the highest interests of the State—almost the safety of the Empire—were at stake; and a bold man when he saw how things were going would have dared to act on his own judgment even in contradiction to the instructions he had received. In expecting this we are probably demanding the exercise of virtues which not one man in a thousand would in like circumstances be found to possess, and in the present instance it is looking to Lord Canning for the possession of those very qualities in which, from the nature of his mind, he is most singularly deficient, however good or great he may be in virtues of a totally opposite nature.

Although, therefore, posterity may probably acquit Lord Canning personally of all responsibility as to these two great disasters, they will scarcely return so favourable a verdict as to the third rebellion, which has marked his ill-starred domination. The smallest amount of prescience—the least show of firmness on the part of Lord Canning, would have prevented the Indigo rebellion from taking the dimensions it has assumed; but whether from apathy or ignorance on his part he has allowed

a restless—but vain and petulant—deputy to set class against class, to unsettle the security of property, to reverse the relations of capital and labour, and to inflict a wound on the financial prosperity of India probably as deep, though not at the time so apparent, as that inflicted by the Great Sepoy Mutiny.

It is easy to understand that it would be singularly distasteful to a man of Lord Canning's indolent turn of mind to enter into a controversy with so ambitious a subordinate as Mr. John Peter Grant; knowing how vain that gentleman was of his power of writing, and how anxious to display his elegant style of composition on all occasions, in season and out of season. He might well have shrunk from this, but it was not needed—all that was required was a temporary veto, a postponement of his measures, anything in fact that would have allowed time for inquiry and reflection, and all the mischief might have been saved. As it stands now, those who know the country best, doubt whether any of the previous events were so detrimental to the future prosperity of India, as this ignoble squabble got up by Mr. Grant and his subordinates. The misfortune is that it is so ignoble that few can be found to take an interest in it, or to believe that it is possible any set of men could act so foolishly.

Disastrous as it was, the story of the Great Sepoy Rebellion was illustrated by deeds of high daring, and sanctified by instances of noble endurance which go far to redeem its horrors, and while we lament the misfortune we cannot but feel an inward satisfaction and pride in the knowledge that our countrymen bore themselves so bravely in that crisis of their fate. It is easy, in consequence, to get a hearing to any explanation of its causes or any recital of its details.

It is very different with the Indigo dispute. What can be said to interest the British public in a dispute where civilians and missionaries interfere between a planter and a ryot to settle the price of a bundle of Indigo? And instead of manly deeds, they only indulge in wordy personalities! All this may be as undignified as a squabble in a parish vestry, but if we look below the surface, and will take the pains to study the signs of the times, we shall probably find as results of this third

rebellion—That property outside the bounds of the Presidential capitals is not worth a year's purchase. That we have undertaken to govern a fine country by European energy and skill, and to defend it by European courage and discipline, and that while doing this we have destroyed the European capital, which alone could provide the means to enable us to carry this through. That we have absolutely interdicted the employment of European energy and intelligence where it was most wanted, and where it alone could suffice to develop the resources and improve the capabilities of the country we have taken under our charge.

If we look closely at it we may find that we have been busily engaged in cutting asunder the very roots which spread into the ground and enabled the tree of European civilization in the East to derive nourishment from the soil, and the consequence may be that the next blast that sweeps across the plain may lay prostrate and for ever the tree which it has taken a hundred years and the wisdom of thousands to raise into maturity, but which the hatchet of a fool may in a few hours overthrow.

If this be so, it cannot be considered a waste of time to attempt to explain to the British public the origin of this miserable quarrel, or to point out to them what its effects are likely to be on the prosperity of our Indian empire, though it may be a vain hope to interest the mass of them in a squabble which has been so contemptible in its causes and must be so inglorious in its results.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORICAL.

It is not necessary in this place to attempt to enter into a history of the Indigo cultivation in Bengal, but a few facts may render what follows more intelligible.

Without going back further than the 17th century it is admitted that up to that time all the Indigo introduced into Europe came from India. Between the years 1664 and 1694 the East India Company imported altogether into England 1,758,060 lbs. of Indigo, or about 800 mds. per annum on an average, principally the produce of Lahore and Agra, and brought down by natives to Surat, which was then their principal factory. After this these imports sensibly diminished, it may have been in consequence of the troubles that ensued on the downfall of the Mogul empire, but more probably from the inability of natives ever to compete with European skill and energy. They were beaten out of the field by the Spanish and French planters of Guatemala and St. Domingo, and more especially by the English, who, about the beginning of the eighteenth century, took up the cultivation vigorously in Jamaica, Barbadoes, and more extensively in Florida and Carolina. In the year 1745 Parliament put a duty of 3s 6d a pound on Indigo grown in British possessions, which forced its abandonment in the British West India Islands. The quarrel between the mother country and her North American colonies prevented for awhile its introduction from—or at all events its extension in—these countries. The troubles of St. Domingo extinguished its production there, and Guatemala alone continued, and continues, to supply its modicum of the dye from the Western world.

While all this was going on in the West, East Indian Indigo was entirely forgotten and utterly unknown in the European markets, but about the year 1770 some enterprising Frenchmen attempted to establish a cultivation of the plant in Bengal and to manufacture it according to the processes invented in Ame-

rica. Their success was not brilliant, but sufficient to excite the jealousy of the Company, who could suffer no interference with their monopoly of all things. About ten years afterwards (1779-80) the Company attempted it on their own account, but according to their own shewing in a few years lost £80,000 by the venture. They therefore made a virtue of necessity, declared the trade free and encouraged their own servants to cultivate it, "in order to afford them a means of remitting their fortunes home, as well to the benefit of Bengal as to this country." (See Despatch, 22nd April, 1789).

From this hour Indigo became the staple of Bengal, not that that province was particularly well adapted to its cultivation, but because monopoly had relinquished its grasp of it, and European capital and energy were henceforth to be applied to its development. Had the Company lost £80,000 by its cotton investments instead, the world would wear a different aspect to what it now does. But to proceed. In the year 1783 Bengal exported to England 1200 mds of Indigo, other countries about ten times that amount; in 1790 Bengal contributed 7388 mds., other countries 17,723; in 1794, Bengal had almost come up with its rivals, exporting 18,000 mds. against 18,500 of other countries. In 1800 the tables were turned. Bengal sent home 39,000 mds., all other countries contributed only 14,000, and from that time forward the disproportion became annually more and more apparent. In 1815-16 the amount of Indigo produced in Bengal was 128,000 mds.—considerably more than it produces now, and from that time forward Bengal supplied all the Indigo required for the consumption of the world, with the exception of a small quantity that came home from Mexico; it might have continued to do so, but that the extravagant prices obtained in 1824 to 1829 stimulated Java and Madras to try their luck in this then profitable speculation, and the reaction in Calcutta, leading to the disasters in 1830-33, helped for awhile to enable them to support the competition. Previous to the year 1815, when the Indigo cultivation in Lower Bengal attained its full development, almost all the factories were in the hands of the Company's servants, especially those who were employed as Commercial Residents, and without this circum-

stance it is probable that it never could have been established at all. The Residents, however, had then, as they have now in the case of opium, full and absolute power to force their advances for silk in other produce on any one they pleased, and absolute power to force any one to reel or work for them as they might direct. So long as this was or is done by members of the Bengal Civil Service, there cannot, according to their account of matters, of course be any injustice or oppression; though if one tenth part of what was and is done by them were done by a free settler the dead would rise from their graves to demand redress against their oppressors.

During the period we are speaking of, the Residents extended to the cultivation of Indigo, for their own sakes, the beneficent powers entrusted to them to procure silk and other articles of commerce for their masters, and with such success that larger fortunes were then realized from the cultivation of the dye than have since unfortunately been obtained.* After the cultivation had fairly been established by the Civil service, it was forced to an unnatural extent by the Free Traders, from the circumstance of its being of all the great and important staples of India, the only one they were allowed to touch. It also happened that during the early part of this century, large sums of money accumulated in the hands of the great agency houses of Calcutta, arising from the savings of the Civil and Military servants of the Company. The Service of course expected interest for their money while so deposited, and a favourable remittance home

* One of the most remarkable instances of this and of the vicissitudes of fortune, was Mr. Williams of the Bengal Civil Service, for a long time the Commercial Resident at Comeercolly. Almost all the Indigo factories in that neighbourhood were built or owned by him, and so rich did he grow that he would not condescend to go home in any ordinary ship, but built one of the finest vessels of her day, the old *Zenobia*, to convey to England himself, his family and his fortune—in the shape of as many chests of Indigo as she would carry. Before she was launched it was whispered that he had used his masters' money—nobody objected to his using their power, in the production of his Indigo. An inquiry was ordered—the verdict was against him—he was dismissed the Service, and died long afterwards a poor old broken-hearted man at Ducca. The *Zenobia* still plies her trade, and every year since has brought a cargo of the ill-fated dye to London, regardless of him who first drove a copper nail into her keel.

when a sufficient sum had accumulated. The Government also came annually into the market and purchased large quantities of Indigo, as a vehicle of remittance for the money required at home.

From these circumstances the cultivation was immensely extended, and prices forced up to such an extent that it resulted, as is usually the case in forced productions, in the crash which occurred in 1830-33.

Notwithstanding all the fostering care which had been bestowed upon it, it does not appear that Indigo ever was in Bengal a profitable investment for money. The old civilians may have made fortunes out of it, but they had advantages not vouchsafed to ordinary mortals. Its cultivation was the proximate cause of the downfall of the great agency houses—it ruined the Union Bank in 1847-48, and numberless professional fortunes gathered together with infinite toil within the Maharatta Ditch have disappeared like magic in its blue depths—while on the other hand, the fortunes which have been made have been few and far between, and out of all proportion small when compared with the amount of capital sunk, and the amount of risk run in its production.

At present Bengal barely holds her own with the rest of the world. A succession of bad seasons in Lower Bengal have reduced the crop to about an average of a lakh, or say one hundred thousand maunds a year. Thus, while Bengal supplied 17,619 chests in 1860 to the London market, Madras, Manilla, Java, &c., sent 9770, or about half as much; and Guatemala furnished 5758 serons, and 7456 in the previous year. Though this diminution in the quantity has forced up the price of Bengal indigo to about 200rs. per maund, the higher price has not compensated the planter for the diminished quantity, while it has served to stimulate the production of the dye in other countries to his detriment. Under these circumstances, he has found it difficult to obtain the outlay to carry on his factories or to keep them in a state of efficiency; and altogether his prospects were so discouraging, that it required the fostering care of Government to help this unfortunate branch of industry over the present crisis—not the unnatural raid of the Civil Service against their own

child. Whatever the faults and failings of the bantling may have been, it has, at least, this merit: that in its day, it has done more to develop the resources and to introduce European skill and capital into India than all the other products of that rich country put together. At present there is nothing to take its place; and if Mr. John Peter Grant succeeds in destroying it, the annual Indian deficit may reach dimensions which will astonish the mind of even a member of the Bengal Civil Service.

CHAPTER II.

THE KALEEKOTA CASE.

WHEREVER indigo planting is mentioned there is a sort of indefinite feeling that there is something very dreadful connected with it—something which it is not easy to define, but which must be very horrible. Missionaries have preached terrible sermons about the abduction of women and cattle, the burning of bazaars, and the imprisonment of unoffending ryots, and so forth. On a recent occasion, a respectable missionary asserted that every chest of indigo that reached the London market was saturated with human gore!—whether to improve the colour or merely to add to the weight was not explained—but when pressed for his authority, he named a member of the Bengal Civil Service, who admitted that he said so;* and, as he had resided in an indigo district, the public (in Europe, at least) can't help fancying there must be something in it. In India they have evinced singular incredulity. However, it will be well to look the matter in the face; no one denies that fights of clubmen or latials have been instigated by planters in former days, and that men have been killed in these affrays. The Commissioners recently appointed to inquire into the matter state (par. 85), "That they had obtained (from the Hon. Ashley Eden) a list of forty-nine serious cases which had occurred in a period of thirty years, in different parts of the country. They do not lay much stress upon it, because violent affrays ending in homicides or

* Since nicknamed, in consequence, "Gory Latour."

wounding are, they are happy to say, of not nearly such frequent occurrence as they used to be, and affrays are not peculiar to indigo planting—they occur equally *where the plant is not grown*.”*

Considering who penned this paragraph, it may be taken for a complete acquittal as the case at present stands, the fact being that, between European and native, they are entirely obsolete; between native and native they still are common and always have been so, but that is of no consequence to our present purpose. If natives like to kill one another, that is their look out. A planter might as well interfere between man and wife as between two Zemindars bent on a little bloodshed; besides that is no crime in the eyes of the Civil Service, though it is of vital importance in their eyes that no European should be accessory to what then becomes a frightful crime. If the Government can prevent this last disgrace, they think they have done all that could well be expected of them.

Let us however admit the whole case, which in fact it is of no use denying—fights *did* take place. Let us take an example and examine the atrocity in all its blackness and see what it amounts to. To do this we must unfortunately go back some five and twenty years, the race is avowedly extinct, and no recent specimen available. Even then, as one of the parties principally concerned is still pursuing his nefarious trade, we will call the village and factory Kaleekota, and the district in which it occurred Paglahpoor, which though it may be a correct designation, is not the name by which it is distinguished on the map.

The village of Kaleekota had cultivated Indigo for the factory, ever since it was established, and, strange though it may appear, had grown rich and saucy either by, or in spite of this. Their Malek or master, the Zemindar, seeing that they were perfectly able to pay an increased rent demanded it, but by the aid of the factory they had always been able to resist his

* It is to be regretted that the means do not exist in this country for a satisfactory analysis of this extraordinary list; for it bears on its face evidence of the most singular misconception of facts and perversion of evidence which can be conceived; but as it was rejected by the Commissioners, we may let it pass also.

illegal exactions. In this state of the case, the Malek offered to lease the village to the factory, and as it was important to have an influence in it, a negociation was opened. When, however, the terms were made known, it was found that the Malek demanded that the factory should pay him an increase of nearly 50 per cent. on what the ryots had been in the habit of paying, in other words should do the iniquity it had assisted in repelling, and should besides pay a large bonus for a lease for seven years. The terms in fact were so unreasonable that they were at once refused. "Very well," said the Zemindar, "if you wont give me what I ask, no ryot in Kaleekota shall cultivate a begah of Indigo for the factory from this day henceforward." No sooner said than done. When the factory servants went as usual to turn out the ploughs in the morning to cultivate the land according to agreement, they were kicked out of the village, and figuratively if not practically beaten, and were immediately despatched to the station to complain. On the other hand if they were in sufficient force to seize the ploughs, off went the ryots to complain that "the factory servants, armed with swords and spears and all manner of lethal weapons, had attacked, beaten, and nearly murdered them." The factory pleaded its agreements, the ryots swore they were forged or obtained by force. Pottahs or leases were taken from parties who claimed property in the village, and claim and counter claim, suits and counter suits were set up by both parties. The object of all this simply being, that if the quarrel could not be settled amicably, and it came to a fight, either party might plead justification. No one expected that the suits would be settled in one or two years, and if settled, that the decree would be enforced. Months were thus spent in squabbling and fruitless negociation, but the sowing season was approaching, and if it was not settled before that; all was lost. What the planter had to look to, was the certainty, that if the Kaleekota Zemindar could force the factory to accede to his terms, every proprietor of every village would have followed his example, and if the ryots were allowed to cultivate or no, as they pleased, in defiance of their agreements, and in spite of the advances they had taken; there was an end of the concern.

With 5000 or 10,000 different ryots to deal with, if each man was to settle his own terms, planting was impossible. A fight, in fact, in those days was inevitable. The factory therefore collected some 200 men, the Zemindar was understood to have done the same. Ultimatums were sent in by diplomatists on both sides, but being rejected, it was understood that a battle might decide the fate of the war any day.

The usual course of these affrays used to be that the factory army advanced towards the recusant village and found the mercenaries employed to defend it drawn up in some advantageous position in front of it. When the armies had approached to within one or two hundred yards of each other the chiefs advanced to the front, and, as in Homer's days, began to harangue each other, not in classic Greek, it must be confessed, but in very exciting Bengallee. When sufficiently excited by each other's eloquence the chiefs of the armies again advanced; each singled out his appropriate foe, and, as in the old days of Greece, five or six single combats took place between the heroes on either side while the armies looked on. Five minutes generally decided the fate of the war. One or two chiefs were wounded or knocked down; very rarely was any man killed. First blood, in fact, decided the fate of the day. The defeated chiefs retired on their supports, who took to their heels, and the victorious army rushed forward with loud shouts and took possession of the city, whose mercenaries had been defeated. As the fight had long been expected all the women and children and old men had been removed, with all their property, to the neighbouring villages, so that very little loot was ever obtained. The object, in fact, was to seize the village and hold it till peace was signed, which was then very speedily accomplished. There the matter ended so far as the factory and villagers were concerned, though some of the mercenaries on either side, probably, got into trouble with the police; but that was their look out. Men who live by breaking the law must be prepared for the consequences when they are caught. If any one was killed, which did sometimes happen, though rarely, it was a very black look out for both parties. It was, it is true, a glorious haul for the police; for as both were equally to blame both were mulcted accordingly. The consequences were,

in fact, so serious that such a result was generally avoided. If the truth were told there is more blood spilt and heads broken in a town and gown row at Oxford or Cambridge than was ever spilt or were cracked in a fight among Bengallees, and more men killed in prize fighting in a series of years in England than were ever killed in Bengal in these encounters. In both cases, when it did happen, it was among men of the same class—professional Athletes who live by fighting, and who, consequently, are not much to be pitied if occasionally one of them fell in the exercise of his profession.

In the particular instance of Kaleekota things did not quite follow the usual routine. When the factory army advanced they saw the villagers;—they were the villagers themselves in this instance,—drawn up in hostile array, but before the attacking party came within scolding distance they fled, and the invaders rushed, with shouts of victory, into the captured town; but here, oh horror of horrors! instead of “a deserted village” they found the Darogah “in possession,” with a large body of police, who immediately proceeded to seize and secure the factory men. They were caught in a trap, but no time was to be lost. Being by far the most numerous they resisted the police, rescued their companions, and escaped to bring the news of the disaster to the factory. Great was the consternation, as may be supposed; but there was only one course open. A trustworthy agent was sent with a heavy bag of rupees to the Tannah. He gave the Darogah a tangible proof of the Sahib’s friendship, and shewed a proportionate degree of consideration to all the inferior officers. A silver salve was applied to the wounds of those who had suffered in the affray, and having adjusted all this satisfactorily, a report was sent to the magistrate, stating “That, fearing a breach of
“the peace, he (the Darogah) had taken with him the men at
“his disposal and gone to Kaleekota to prevent disturbances,
“but that the villagers, excited thereto by evil-disposed persons,
“had refused him admittance to the village, and had beaten his
“men and defied his authority. Under these circumstances,
“he requested further powers and a reinforcement of men, and,
“meanwhile, he sent a couple of his wounded peons who would
“tell his honour all about it.”

To make a long story short, the result was that the villagers were seized, tried, and condemned to imprisonment with hard labour, in the common gaol of Paglahpoor for periods varying from six months to six years. It need hardly be added that there was no further question about the lease of Kaleekota, or whether the ryots should or should not cultivate Indigo for the factory. All this is very horrible no doubt, and ought not to have been—but who is to blame for it? There were at least four parties concerned in the transaction: the Government—the Civil Service—the Planter, and the Natives. Let us try if we can apportion to each his fair share of these transactions.

SECTION I.

The Government.

The Government of India saw Indigo to the value of at least £2,000,000 sterling annually brought to Calcutta—they themselves generally purchased one half of it—they knew that three or four millions more must have been sunk in building the factories where it was produced; they knew that the million and a half of hard cash which this industry distributed through their districts enabled them to realize their rents to an extent, and with a facility which would have been otherwise impossible, and knew that nothing had done so much to increase the trade and to develop the resources of India as Indigo planting had done. But Government did not know who produced this dye—they knew that certain individuals had stolen out to India under free mariner's indentures; but they were assumed to be ploughing the main, not cultivating Indigo—and they knew that certain mariners had made free with their indentures and disappeared, possibly into the interior; but no one knew where. The law did not recognize the existence of any such class. No British born subject, mariner or otherwise, could hold an acre of land or possess a pennyworth of property outside the Maharatta ditch. In so far as the Government or the law was concerned, the class of Indigo planters was non-existent. The factories were built on a plot of land of which a lease was taken from a man who

probably could show no title to it, in the name of some native factory servant who probably was dead and left no heirs, executors or assigns. To the land beyond the factory ditch, the planter had not even to this the ghost of a title. He advanced lakhs and lakhs of Rupees annually to men who had not property to the value of one tenth of the amount advanced, and who ran up an account of one or two hundred rupees without troubling themselves twice about it. No interest was ever charged; a return of the advance was never asked for otherwise than in service; and if it had ever been asked, it would have puzzled any one to explain legally, how the debt was contracted or who the creditor was. It certainly was not the shadowy planter who provided the money.

All this may have been wise and proper, but it had the effect of making the production of Indigo very uncertain and very expensive, and it deterred men who had got either capital or character to lose from engaging in the speculation. The real wonder is not that there should have been some black sheep among the early planters, but that any man of respectability could be found to accept the position of outlawry in which it suited the Government of India to place them.

So far from wondering that some of the acts of the planters should not have been strictly legal, it would probably puzzle all the jurists in Europe to explain how a man can act legally whose existence the law does not recognize or provide for. It would be equally difficult to explain how any one is to hold or protect property to which the law of the land gives him no title whatever, unless he can protect it by his own strong arm and his own superior ability. The real truth of the matter is, his title was in his blood. The title by which the planter held his factory, was precisely analogous to that by which the Company held India. It was because he was more just, more sober, more reasonable than those around him that he was able to defeat every combination, and to hold his own among his equals and secure the willing obedience of those who were placed under him. This may have been right or it may have been wrong; but it was rather hard that the Government which so shamefully neglected its first duty, as not to acknowledge the existence of a large and influential body

of its subjects should now turn round and say—Gentlemen, your acts are not in strict conformity with the law !

Things have altered much since that time, however. Planters have been permitted to acquire property, and to hold it in their own names ; and acts of lawlessness have decreased in the exact ratio in which their property has become more secure, and would absolutely cease if the law were better administered. We hope indeed to prove before we are done that all that is alleged against the Planter is not the effect of any desire on his part to break the law, but is the inevitable result of the wretched state of the administration of justice in Lower Bengal, which has forced him occasionally to take the law into his own hand, in order to protect his own person and property from the lawlessness for which the Government is alone responsible.

SECTION II.

The Civilian.

No one who knows the Indian Civil Service but must admit that they are an extraordinary body of men—an honour to the country which produced them, and a credit to the empire they are called upon to govern ; at the same time, no one who knows much of human nature will fancy that a body of men who were selected while boys from a large section of the people, and not chosen for mental qualifications but from relationship to certain patrons, can all turn out Solons or models of discretion or gentlemanly bearing. He will not be surprised to learn that some remain drones through life, while others are so elated by the position in which they are placed, that their conduct is an injury to the service to which they belong, and a frightful misfortune to those who are placed under their charge.

Even if they were all Solons, and Solomons into the bargain, more is generally expected of them than any ordinary mortal could satisfactorily perform. Many indigo districts contain from 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 of inhabitants ; and it is expected that all the judicial, revenue, and criminal causes among this population should be examined into and decided by three or four men. Let us

fancy three Germans or Spaniards, who having acquired a fair smattering of English, were to be placed at Lanark to decide all the judicial, revenue, and criminal causes of Scotland south of the Clyde and Forth—or at York, to do all the business of the three Ridings! If these three foreigners were to attempt this, instead of the thousands of trained men who now perform these duties, and who have been chosen for their fitness, and who have devoted their lives to the business, any one may guess what would be the result in a few weeks. The case of the Civil Service, however, is worse than this; English and Scotch men are prudent, and would soon learn to govern themselves. The Bengalees are excitable, litigious, prone to falsehood, and utterly incapable of self-government. The assistance the Civilian gets from the natives in the discharge of his functions is a frightful aggravation of his difficulties. The salaries of his Omlah, or officers of the court, are so small, and their position so important, that, with the fewest possible exceptions, they eke out their scanty pay by bribes received from suitors, and, what is worse still, one and all of them encourage the belief that their master is as corrupt as themselves—the keystone of the system being that all should be believed to share according to their several degrees. Another disadvantage under which the service labours is that, where all must be employed, men are never, or with the rarest possible exceptions, appointed to an office because of their fitness for it. The Judge is placed on the bench, not because he knows anything of the law or of judicial business, but because he has succeeded by seniority to that grade. The Collector need not know anything of figures or political economy; and the Magistrate is a younger man, learning his business at the expense of the subject, prior to his being promoted to be Collector, Judge, Commissioner, and Governor of the province, as the case may be.

Another regulation, more detrimental to the efficiency of the Civil Service, is, that they are changed every three years from one district to another. If there was the smallest possible suspicion that any of them were corrupt, this might be most wise; but, as no one whose opinion is worth anything ever hinted such a thing, it is most uncalled for. If a new magistrate is sharp and clever, with a keen eye and a knowledge of mankind, he

will find out in six months, or a year, at all events, who are the peaceful men of his district—who the disturbers of the law; and he will find out who are the least corrupt among his Omlah, and, by a little extra judicial sharpness, he will let people know that he is not to be trifled with; and for the next two years, or two years and a-half, he will be a valuable servant, and his district a model of order and propriety. If he is a slow man, it may take him all his three years to find out this, and during that period he will be pottering over evidence and turning over regulations, whilst outside everything will be going to the dogs. During his dynasty, the man who can hire the largest quantity of evidence, and secure the services of the most experienced false witnesses, will have it all his own way, provided, of course, that he has money enough to bribe pretty freely.

It may appear to Englishmen a very proper regulation that a Judge or Magistrate must decide according to the evidence. A timid Civilian always does—because the evidence as written down is liable to be overhauled by the Commissioner, or by a Court in Calcutta, in the event of an appeal, by persons in short, who have not the slightest idea of the character of the Plaintiff or Defendant, or can tell whether the witnesses were witnesses by profession or by accident. Any one, however, who knows his business, knows that the evidence is about the last thing he ought to attend to. If it is clear, it is certain to be false; if confused and exaggerated, it may be true. Forms and evidence are, in fact, most excellent institutions wherever there is time and skill to sift the one, and a sufficiently numerous and well trained staff to carry through the other with regularity and precision. But when three men are set to do the work that could hardly be done efficiently by three hundred, some shorter cut is indispensable, and no one would blame the Civil Service for taking it, if they did not pretend that their hap-hazard way of dispensing justice or injustice was the perfection of law, and did not fancy that such blind work could either give security to property or enable a country to develop its resources without some other machinery being established for that purpose.

This may seem strange reasoning to Englishmen accustomed to see on the Bench only men who are chosen for their fitness

and experience. Who are in the habit of seeing every shred of evidence sifted by the keenest and most intellectual Bar, till nothing remains but the residuum of truth which it may contain, and even then are not content to allow the Judge and the Bar to decide, though the eyes of the public are upon them, but refer the whole to a jury of impartial men. People whose lives and property are protected by such safeguards as these, have no idea what it is to live under such a system as necessarily prevails in India. Trial by jury is one thing, the opposite pole to this is trial by perjury—and that unfortunately is the normal institution of the Company's Courts in India.

Civilians of course will not confess it, but in the bottom of their hearts they must feel that the position in which they are placed is a most trying and most humiliating one. They are placed on the bench without any special fitness or previous training. They never were at the bar or among the people they are called upon to judge. They never saw the action of the law or the suitors except from the bench, and have consequently no idea that there is any other than the Civilian side of the question. They have no bar to assist, no jury to steady them, no public opinion to guide them, and no subordinate officer to support them. They are surrounded by men who have no ties of affection, and no official familiarity with the ever shifting Civilian. Under these circumstances it is easy to see what must happen, the Civilian is a far better, more honest, and more intelligent man than those among whom he is placed; but when he asserts that he dispenses justice, we are quite safe in replying that he does not know the meaning of the word he is using.

There is one other circumstance which aggravates to a very considerable extent the difficulties of the position in which the Civilian is placed, which is his entire segregation from all men except those of his own class.

So soon as he was appointed in England he was sent to a class college at Haileybury and educated with young men who were destined for the civil service only. He could not be aboard ship many days without finding out, by the universal deference paid him, that he was a different class of mortal, not only from his or-

dinary ship-mates but even from his own brother, if he had one on board, who might be only a cadet, or, even worse, a free mariner. Arrived in India, he used, in former days, to be again separated from his fellow-men in the college at Fort William. He is now drafted off into mansions of the higher Civilians at Chowringhee till he proceeds up the country. There his society consists only of a knot of three or four individuals of the Civil service, who form the little self-laudatory coterie of a Bengal Civil station, and beyond these he sees nothing but a set of cringing, fawning sycophants, the worst representatives of their class. The good and respectable natives keep as far from the Company's Courts as the limits of the district will allow, and none approach them but for interested motives, and of these none hesitate to attempt to attain their ends by the grossest flattery, or it may be by the most barefaced imposture.

No native in Lower Bengal—up country it is different—ever dreams of approaching a Civilian on terms of equality. No one ever dares to tell him the truth. From morning till night he only hears that there is only God in heaven and him on earth, that he can do no wrong, that he is father and mother, “all the world besides” to every one that approaches him. All this may sound very ridiculous at first, but when a man is steeped in flattery for years it takes effect at last. If not a god he is more than mortal—at least formed of different clay from other vessels. The channel of communication with sublunar mortals is either entirely cut off or so poisoned as to be worse than useless, and when a rude mortal like an Indigo planter dares to tell his godship that he is no better than other men of women born, the effect is, to say the least of it, singularly displeasing, and has in fact, led to all this disturbance. But of this more hereafter. All that is wanted in the present state of the inquiry is to recognise the fact of the extreme difficulty of the position in which a Civilian is placed. It is absurd to ascribe to them improper motives for their conduct. So long as a Civilian is only mortal it is quite impossible that he should dispense equal justice to a million or two of people without subordinate officers, on whom he can depend, without a code of laws or settled forms of procedure, without the assistance of a Bar and without a police, who

can be trusted. He has none of these, and the consequence is that, in spite of the virtues and talents of the Civilian individually, the administration of justice in Lower Bengal is a disgrace to the name of Englishmen.*

SECTION III.

The Planter.

THERE is very little to be said in extenuation of the part the Planter bore in the transaction, consequent on the Kaleekota Izarah case. A man who commits a breach of the peace must be prepared to take the consequences of his lawlessness and to bear the obloquy which is certain to follow. It is in vain to urge that it was a necessary condition of the position in which he was placed. This may be, and in the present instance is, true, but why then accept this position? If a man places himself knowingly where a breach of the law is the necessary consequence of

* Since the above was in type a Pamphlet has been published by John Dickenson, Jun., purporting to be a "Reply to the Indigo Planter's pamphlet, entitled Brahmins and Pariahs," the object of which is two-fold. First, to complain that the Planters have not subscribed with sufficient liberality to the payment of his salary as Secretary of the Indian Reform Association. "Hinc illæ lachrymæ." Secondly, to defend J. P. Grant and his subordinates against the accusations of the Planters.

In the penultimate paragraph he sums up the defence of the Bengal Government in the following emphatic words—"I have only to add, that on one point the natives do most cordially agree with the Indigo planters, which is, in declaring that the maladministration of justice in India is such an intolerable grievance that the English people can form no conception of it! It is this shocking maladministration of justice which directly produces that 'fearful state of demoralisation and anarchy' to which the missionaries bore witness, in their petition to Parliament in 1857; and it cannot be too distinctly explained, nor too often reiterated, that this cruel mockery of justice is due, not to the badness of the laws, but to the want of professional qualifications in the men who administer the laws. As it was well observed by the late Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Mr. Halliday, in, I think, the very last Minute he penned, before quitting the public service in 1859: 'We are no nearer than we were twenty years ago to a system of judicial training for our civil officers; and while we are supposed to be improving our civil and criminal procedure laws, we are doing nothing whatever to improve our Judges.'"

his condition, he is even more to blame than if the misfortune had come on him suddenly and unexpectedly. Once for all, it must be admitted that in former days a man was not only a fool but worse—"une faute est pire qu'un crime"—ever to accept the position of an Indigo Planter in Lower Bengal under a Civilian Government. All that can be pleaded in extenuation is, that the temptation was sometimes greater than poor weak human nature could easily resist. It was hardly possible not to be seduced in the good old days of the Civilian Planter, when misconduct and oppression bore different names to those which have since been used to designate these acts, and when profits flowed in merrily and fortunes were made rapidly. It was almost equally impossible to resist the temptation in the palmy days of the old Agency houses, when Indigo was selling at 300 or 350 rupees per maund, when profits were large, capital abundant, and money to be had for the asking, when estimates were not scrutinized minutely, and all went well. After the failure of the great houses and that of the Union Bank, he must have been a very strong minded man who could resist purchasing for 30,000 or 40,000 rupees properties which had never before been valued at less than three or four lakhs, and which had made the fortunes of A, and B, and C, in times gone by.

In addition to the financial temptations, came the fact that it would be difficult to find in the whole world a pleasanter occupation than that of Indigo planting. It had all the pleasures of farming in this country without any of its disagreeables. The work is light and the occupation healthful and pleasant—living entirely by himself and thrown on his own resources, a spirit of manly independence is engendered which calls forth and exercises all the best feelings and energies of a man's nature; while it would be difficult to place any man in a prouder position than that of governing and guiding a docile people with whom all his relations are of the most pleasant and patriarchal kind. Even the uncertainty of the seasons adds a zest to the occupation, and afford an excitement most pleasing to hopeful and energetic minds. It would, in fact, be difficult to say too much of the delights of a Planter's life in the abstract. But in the midst of all this—"surgit amari aliquid"—there is a curse

that poisons all his enjoyment—a sword of Damocles continually suspended over him. He never can help feeling that he has embarked his fate and fortune in the purchase of a concern to which he has about as good a legal title as the sailor has to the waves his ship is ploughing through!

So long as he is feared by his equals and respected by his inferiors, all may go right, provided no native as powerful as himself casts a longing eye on his property, and no Civilian with a crotchet is appointed to the district. But these and other contingencies may arise any hour—he must watch and work, and be prepared to defend himself at all risks against all comers—one moment of weakness and all may be lost, not from any fault of his own, but because he happens to live under a government that cannot afford to its subjects the security of property which is the first element of civilization or national prosperity.

The disputes and difficulties in which the Planter become involved in consequence of this insecurity of property were very rarely with the ryots themselves. They arose in a vast majority of cases from differences with men as powerful as himself. It may be from disputes about a lease, as in the case of the Kaleekota Village; but they most frequently arise from some natives casting a longing eye on the planter's crops of Indigo. Seeing what a profitable business Indigo planting is supposed to be to the European, why should not the native Zemindar build a couple of vats on his own land, in his own village, and put into cultivation if only some twenty or thirty begahs to begin with? The law of course cannot interfere to prevent this—God forbid that it should. If the Planter does, he is guilty of a gross interference with the rights of property. It is allowed—at the end of the season it is found that the native has made some thirty or forty maunds of Indigo, when, according to the rates per begah of the European's cultivation, he ought to have had only three or four. He is lucky, and what is more extraordinary, his run of luck sticks to him. Year by year, his proportion of produce increases, while that of the Planter decreases, till the latter vanishes altogether and he disappears from the scene.

No one who knows Bengal is at a loss to explain the phenomenon. The native is landlord, and is willing to take his rents in kind; he has made no advances, run up no loans, paid nothing

for seed, and runs no risk, consequently can afford to allow liberally for the plant. The ryots are probably in his debt; his loan bears interest at 16 or 24 per cent., and is payable on demand. The Planter's loan bears no interest, and is never redemanded. It is far better for the ryot to get rid of the debt to his master than of that to the planter. The native has power and influence, the factory has little and is getting weaker (if this were not so his factory would not be there)—he can take what the ryot will not give. Then the factory has some private cultivation (neez, as it is called)—it is easy for him to double or treble the pay of the factory servants if they will connive at his boats coming in the night and assisting in carrying the plant; all this is easy, and has been done hundreds of times. The remedy is, of course, an appeal to the Courts of law. Let us follow the suits through their various phases—

1st suit. You prove that Ramdhun, who previously owed you eighty rupees, took this year a further advance of ten or twenty rupees, on the understanding that he would cultivate ten begahs for the factory. An understanding is not an agreement,—but that is got over.

2nd. Which ten begahs?—again not specified; but as it was a certain well-defined ten begahs last year, it is admitted that these were intended this.

3rd. What right had Ramdhun to the property?—where are his titles? Neither he nor any ryot has any title, and no one knows how he got possession of the land; but he has cultivated it for the last ten years—good.

4th. He did cultivate it for the factory this year, and sowed the factory seed in it—this is admitted—and he brought the produce to the factory; but the season was bad, and he only reaped half the usual quantity. It requires no small amount of evidence to prove this account false—but it is done.

5th. Hunted out of all these holes, he at last admits that he sold half his produce to the native factory. On this the judge decrees that a man has a perfect right to sell his produce in the highest or in any market. But, objects the Planter, what is to become of my 100 rupees? Oh, says the judge, you have your remedy at law; you can enter a suit for the recovery of the debt. But the man has no property—nothing beyond the rag round

his loins? I am sorry for you, Mr. Planter; if you have made a foolish loan, you must be content to bear the result of your own imprudence! This is the legal remedy; four or five, or, if well supported by the native Planter, perhaps a dozen of suits. The practical remedy is either that the Planter takes the bull by the horns at first, and either by taking a lease of the village or by fighting it out then and there, he prevents the factory being established within his cultivation. If too weak and too timid to do this, there is nothing for it but, every manufacturing season, to have a large body of men to protect his property; the native planter does the same. When the Planter sends men to cut plant which he knows to be his, the native sends men to prevent them cutting what he swears belongs to him. They fight, and the victorious party carries off the plant, and the Civilian shakes his head and says—What villains these Planters are! A Planter, however, must make up his mind to accept the villany at once, or the sooner he packs up his traps and quits the Civilian-governed province the better for him and his employers.

Questions such as these arise every day in Bengal, and cannot be avoided, because the boundaries of villages have never been defined, and much less so the divisions and distributions of property within them. There have been no surveys ever made, there are no maps or plans, no titles, no registration. In plain English there is no real property in Bengal.*

Till very recently, landed property, as between the natives,

* The following remarks by the Lieut.-Governor of Agra, dated 1849, and published in a Blue-book, dated August, 1850, bear, with tolerable clearness, on this subject. “The effect of the settlement (for land revenue) is most striking in diminishing, or rather terminating one class of crimes which used to be common, and very pernicious in their consequences, viz., affrays on account of land. The difficulties of bringing a suit regarding land to adjudication, and the risk of making good in the civil Courts a really just right were formerly so great, that resort was frequently had to blows and violence, as the readiest and almost the only means of bringing a dispute to a termination.” There were no planters in those cases, but the usual mode of holding or transferring property was the stick. The Civilians of the North-west have by their industry, defined titles, and so stopped this mode of tenure. The Civilians in Lower Bengal have been too lazy to attempt it, and therefore lay the whole blame of their negligence on the Indigo Planters, who have never ceased to pray for better titles since they undertook the cultivation of Indigo.

was transferred by the stick and held by the stick in Lower Bengal as it used to be before the recent settlement in the Upper Provinces. The Planters, however, have lately introduced the novel mode of purchasing villages and farms for money, and paying cash for them. So new and unexpected is this mode of transfer, that they have had the pick of whatever they wanted, and with sufficient capital could buy up all Bengal at very reasonable rates.

As before stated, in the exact ratio in which they have acquired rights have outrages ceased. But it has had this evil effect. It has rendered the Planter independent and saucy ; he stands up for his rights, and has bearded the Civilian on the bench, and "horresco referens," he has defied a Lieutenant-Governor of Lower Bengal. The service can no longer conceal from themselves that the hour of the struggle is come, either the upstart Planter must be put down, or the Civil service will no longer have the absolute and unquestioned control over the lives and properties of their subjects. They have struck the first blow and their victim is prostrate, whether he is ever to rise again, remains among the secrets of futurity.

As soon as the Civilians found the Planters getting so independent as to talk of equal rights and equal laws, they tried hard to put a stop to it by the enactments which were most properly called "*Black Acts.*" The object of these was to deprive British born subjects of their birthright of trial by jury and to subject them to the Civilian institution of trial by perjury. The thing, however, was too monstrous. It is true the Hon. Ashley Eden says he would prefer to be tried by one of the Company's Courts, but as he belongs to a body of men who are above all law, and who cannot be tried under any circumstances by these, or practically by any Courts, he was tolerably safe in saying so, and can hardly be considered a fair witness. The protest against this measure was so universal that even the Council in Calcutta, though principally composed of Civilians, dared not pass it, and the older Civilians shrewdly suspected that though it might be very pleasant to put their feet on the necks of the Planters, it might be a dangerous amusement. If they only imprisoned or hanged one influential Planter for a crime they had no means of investigating, they probably would

not soon hear the end of it, so they have let it drop for the present, and only tried to insult their fellow-countrymen by passing disarming acts, refusing him the privilege of keeping a gun to shoot wild ducks or Florikin, and whenever they could, during the mutiny, classing him with the rebellious natives. All this is so petty as to be merely ridiculous, and so it was felt by both parties till it moved John Peter Grant to stir up a revolution in the hopes of settling the question at once by eradicating the Planters altogether at one fell swoop.

The obvious answer that suggests itself to this sketch of the position of affairs in Bengal is, that we are talking of events which occurred twenty-five years ago, and that since that time forms of procedure and increased industry and intelligence on the part of the Civil service have improved the dispensation of justice to a very considerable extent, so that these strictures are no longer applicable. Let us hope it may be so. If it is so, it is all the Planter asks for, and what he certainly does not consider he has obtained. Whether this is so or not, they cannot be considered as irrelevant, inasmuch as Mr. Grant on the 17th December last commences his Minute on the Indigo Report, by publishing with a great flourish of trumpets, the iniquities alleged against four Planters in the year 1810, and after quoting triumphantly Lord Minto's minute on the subject, he adds (para. 6):—"These proceedings half-a-century ago, when considered in connexion with late events, will be seen to be of great interest now, and to have a strong practical bearing on the present position of affairs." Substitute "quarter of a century" for half a century in the above paragraph, and it proves that what is stated above has twice as much bearing in the present crisis as Lord Minto's minute could possibly have. In fact, if Mr. Grant, with all the records of Government at his command, is obliged to go back fifty years, in a country where things change so rapidly as they have done in India, before he could find an example with which to head his pleadings, he admits that he has no case which will bear examination. It is difficult to conceive a cause so weak as to require such distant aid, or a logic so feeble as that contained in the assertion, that the Planters of the present day should be expelled, because four men misbehaved themselves in 1810, when they were avowedly interlopers and

probably of the lowest class. Besides this they were then under the protection and influenced by the example of the lawless Civilians of those days.

There is, however, this connexion between the two events which may justify Mr. Grant in referring to it. It proves that neither fifty nor twenty-five years nor twenty-five days ago could the Civil Service afford protection to its subjects against the evil purposes of any other class; that then as now, the strong could oppress the weak in spite of their so-called Courts of Justice, that property was insecure and the administration of justice convulsive and irregular.

Turn it which way you will, no impartial person can read all these minutes and reports without perceiving that all the Planters' faults and misdeeds arise from the fact that he is living in a country where justice is a mockery, and property a shadow, and he consequently must either take himself off at once or hold on to what he can in the scramble, and take the obloquy which his unhappy position forces upon him.

With the Civilians the case is different. For more than a century they have had absolute control over the country, and during this time they have not been able to give to any class of their subjects security to either person or property. With the best intentions in the world the least that can be said of them is that they have undertaken a task they have proved themselves unable to perform; and it is rather amusing to see them now trying to escape the blame they so richly deserve, by abusing the unfortunate victims of their incapacity, and trying in the blaze of revolution to obliterate the records of their own misdoings.

To all this we shall return presently. We must turn to the Ryot first, and try to explain what part he bore in this Kaleekota business.

SECTION IV.

The Ryot.

In order to understand the relative position of the Ryot in this embroglio, it is only necessary to assume that the Civilians have governed India with the strictest impartiality, that they have shown no favour to their fellow countrymen, and no bias

against them, and that they have been equally unprejudiced as regards their native subjects. They cannot ask for more than this admission, yet what results from it? Either their Courts are a farce, mere moonshine, or the agreements between the Planters and the Ryots are fair and equitable on the whole. If this were not so, we come to the staggering fact that 200 or 300 Europeans have been able to force on 200,000 or 300,000 natives, engagements which were unjust in principle, and unfair in their operations; that they have annually been able to renew these agreements during the last 30 or 40 years, and during the whole of the time, the Courts have been absolutely powerless to redress this evil, almost in one single instance. So far from being able to check it, it has spread under their very noses. Thirty years ago, a great deal of the cultivation of Bengal was necessarily carried on by the Planter on his own account, year by year; that has been abandoned as unprofitable and ryottee substituted. So that, in the beginning of last year, there was probably as much ryottee cultivation in Lower Bengal as at any previous period. Where were the Courts when they allowed this iniquity to grow up and establish itself? Was the Government a farce? Could it not, at least, check the growth of the plague spot? The plain truth is, had the ryottee system been as oppressive as it is now pretended it is, it could not have lasted an hour. It would have broken down years ago. The ryots liked it, and they at least never would have rebelled, though their masters the zemindars might.

Let us look a little more closely at one of these agreements and see what it consisted of, when perhaps we shall be better able to judge of its merits. A ryot is in want of money—a circumstance which may happen to him as well as to other men without capital, in spite of Mr. Grant's facetious assertion that he is the real capitalist of Bengal; he comes to the factory and offers to cultivate ten begahs of plant. He gets 20 rupees paid to him by the planter himself in hard cash, and as so much bright silver is or was seldom seen in the Mofussil in former times, he signs an agreement to cultivate the land and bring the produce to the factory. We will presume he is unfortunate, and his land only produces enough to pay back 10 rupees—he is only entitled

to, and gets a like sum. But shortly afterwards he returns to explain that his bullocks have died. He wants to bury his mother—it is astonishing how many mothers ryots have. His landlord is pressing him for rent;—on every occasion, in fact, he rushes to the factory to beg for money, and in nine cases out of ten gets it. No interest is charged, but it is no uncommon thing to see men who have never cultivated more than 10 begahs, owing the factory from 200 to 300 rupees, every penny of which must have been given him in hard cash, in addition to money, he may have received for plant brought in. There is something almost ludicrous in the way an old ryot feels his power over his master, and the grim satisfaction with which he explains to him, that he owes him, say, 200 rupees. That he has no property in the world, except the clothes he has on, which, in that climate, are not much, either in extent or value, and that if master will not advance him money, he must bolt, and then where will the 200 rupees be!

It is difficult to prove from the want of reliable data to what extent the Indigo crop is really remunerative to the ryot, but the large sums of money which are paid for plant at the end of every manufacturing season by every factory, show that something considerable must be gained by somebody, while probably very little is expended. The best land for Indigo is the highest, or the open sandy churs, both of which are unfitted for rice, or any class of cultivation the natives themselves indulge in, and according to the most reliable statistics which can be obtained only from 1-16th to 1-20th of the arable land of Lower Bengal is occupied by Indigo cultivation.

The cultivation must cost very little. Every ryot must have bullocks and ploughs to cultivate his other crops. He may plough his Indigo land whenever it may be convenient to him between October and March. He does his weeding and cutting himself at seasons when he can do nothing else. His seed is provided for him. He does not disburse one farthing in cash, and his labour so apportioned must be of very little value to him. Putting what he practically disburses against what he practically receives, any one will understand why he did not complain before, and why it required all the influence of the Lieut.-Governor and his subordinates, to stir him up to discontent.

Once the jacquerie was fairly afoot, Mr. Grant turned round with the most benign complacency and said—You see how deep-seated this discontent must have been; the permission not to sow has been availed of in nearly every concern in Lower Bengal. To try a parallel case: suppose the British Parliament, instead of attempting to pass an Act for the relief of Insolvent Debtors, so complicated that it broke down last year, had only taken a leaf out of Mr. Grant's book, and declared that no man who owed more than he could conveniently pay need trouble himself any more about the matter; his debts were forgiven him. Would not a very large class have availed themselves of the new law? Creditors might have objected, and it is not easy to see how business could be carried on under its provisions; but the new law would be a godsend to many, though, in this country, no honest man would avail himself of its provisions, and those who could pay, but did not, because of the new law, would, probably, be called swindlers or worse. In Bengal the case is different. On the 16th of January last, the Committee of the Bengal Indigo Association write, "In no instance that the Committee are aware of has the ryot come forward to free himself from his engagements and liabilities by paying or adjusting the balance he owes the planter. Universal and unscrupulous repudiation of all liabilities has been the rule among the ryots, and the Government of Bengal, in every document relating to the subject, has steadily ignored the existence of all contracts or engagements between planter and ryot."

As the principal indictment against the Planter is, that once a ryot gets into his books he never can free himself from his indebtedness, but becomes a slave for life,* is it not strange that none should have availed themselves of this simple mode of freeing themselves from bondage? It cannot be want of ability, for there are tens of thousands of ryots who receive fresh advances every year, and whose debts, in consequence, must be very light and could be paid without an effort; but why should they? The Civilians have told them they need not pay, and they laugh in

* This only applies to Lower Bengal: in Tirhoot, where the Ryot is never allowed to get into debt, the cultivator regularly renews his agreement year after year.

the Planter's face! In any Court of honour or of justice in Europe, men who encourage such a course of action would be held liable as accessories before the fact. In the case of Bengal, the bad characters were the first, who not only availed themselves of the Government permission not to pay, but took care that the good men should follow their example. Their only chance of continued immunity was, that all stood out alike, and, in cases of revolution or rebellion, the bad always drag the good with them, and make them eventually pay the penalty of their own crimes.

If we are to take the Civilians' interpretation of the contract the Planters must be the most beneficent and benevolent body of men in existence. Fancy a kind-hearted man settling himself down in the Mofussil with a heavy bag of bright rupees, which he lends without stint and without charging interest, to a set of paupers, who can give no security and have no property. The good kind man never asks for re-payment, but allows it to go on from year to year increasing, till it is morally impossible it ever should be re-paid. The modest Planter repudiates the imputation that it was mere benevolence that induced him to do all this. He did it because there was a distinct stipulation per contra that his debtor should cultivate a certain quantity of Indigo for him annually. Oh! no, says the Civilian, it is a mere ordinary book debt. There is no other consideration. If you wish to recover your balance our Courts are open; a chancery suit will not take more than two years, nor cost more than 10 times the amount of the debt. But that is all you can claim. Do they believe this? or are they only mocking the men whose ruin they have predetermined?

There is one other point of view from which this Kaleekota case should be looked at, before leaving it altogether. The Indigo Report, at the instigation of the missionary member of it, tries hard to fix on the Planters the stigma of kidnapping, by seizing ryots illegally, shutting them up in their godowns for days together—in fact, till they sign these agreements or pay their debts. It is true there is only one case brought forward that will hold water at all, and that breaks down at last; all the rest are admitted to be mere hearsay. Still, as it is not impossible that

such events may have occurred, it is hardly worth while to stop to contradict them. One thing, however, is certain, that the kidnappings, as they are called, do occur every day among the natives themselves. If a ryot does not pay his rent—or a poor man will not or cannot pay his debt—the agent of the Zemindar or Mahajun instantly sends out pcons, seize the man, confine him in an outhouse, and frequently—what never has been alleged against the Planter—beat and torture him. It is the usual, universal custom of the country. Every Civilian knows it, and knows also that he and his police are utterly powerless to prevent it. But is it clear that we are free from this foul stain even in this country? It is only last month that the public were as much amused as horrified at hearing that the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge was in the habit of kidnapping milliners' girls, and shutting them up in a godown of his own, without any form of trial, and keeping them there just as long as suited his good pleasure—and this, too, in legal, well-ordered, constitutional England!

Mr. Edwin James tried hard to rouse indignation against this most illegal act, but the public took it very quietly. If it was not quite legal it was customary; and, after all, there was no great harm done—and it is very doubtful if Parliament will take the trouble to give an order which would put an end to it at once. Had Edwin James only have been in the position of Seton Karr, and had his power, he would have raised the under-graduates to a man against this nefarious interference with their privileges. He would have closed the Colleges and abolished the University. This, at least, is the way slight abuses are reformed in Bengal. Because it is suspected that an Indigo Planter may have been guilty of kidnapping and some other similar offences, a whole province is delivered over to anarchy and rebellion. Factories of greater pecuniary value than the Colleges of Cambridge are confiscated and closed, and an institution of far more value and importance to India than a University is to England is abolished and swept from the face of the earth! *

* The case against the Planters on which the greatest stress is laid in Mr. Seton Karr's Report is that discussed in paras. 91, 92 and 93; and the voluminous evidence by which it is sought to establish the fact

So usual and so time-honoured is the institution of kidnapping among the natives themselves, that when not abused—that is, when only employed against men who have wrongfully refused to do what they ought to have done—it is probable the natives themselves would hardly be found to object to it. What they do most seriously object to is, being seized by the police, dragged to a distant station, tried by some strange hocus-pocus they cannot comprehend, and condemned, like the Kaleekota ryots, to be imprisoned among felons, and forced to hard labour in irons for years, when they know they are guiltless of the crimes of which they stand convicted.

What the natives do also object to is being seized by the police for their own private purposes—dragged to the Tannah—imprisoned—tortured—robbed—for the benefit of the Darogah and his subordinates! The Civilians—the missionaries—every one in fact admits that this is of almost daily occurrence all over Lower Bengal, and all that is pleaded in extenuation, is that the police are and always have been corrupt. This may be true, but when the Civilian admits that he practises these iniquities through his subordinates, the accusation against the Planter should come from some one whose hands are cleaner than his are. At all events he should not be surprised to hear that the ignorant native prefers the treatment he receives from the Planter's Gomastah to that which he receives from the Civilian's Darogah.

that an individual Planter had abducted a native married woman for immoral purposes.

This case, which is the most heinous that could be discovered, and the only one of its class that was brought forward, breaks down, like all the rest, when examined into, and is dismissed even by Mr Karr. It would, therefore, be hardly worth while alluding to it now, were it not for two curious points that leak out from its examination. First, The fact so creditable to the Planters, that among so large a body of men so situated, and among a people so prone to false accusations, only one crime of this class should be alleged against them. Secondly, It is assumed throughout the Report, that if this one case had been established against this individual Planter, that it would have justified all that the Civilians have done towards the abolition of Indigo planting in Bengal!

Would it not sound strange if a Member of Parliament were to bring in a Bill to abolish hop planting, because an individual hop planter had committed an outrage on one of his tenants' wives? The connection between the two things does not appear clear to the English mind.

If the truth were known, it would be found that one-half of those confined in the Government gaols are not criminals, but political prisoners—sent there because they have offended some man more powerful than themselves, and to gratify spite and revenge. It is so easily managed. A native renders himself obnoxious to some great man, and is either too powerful or too clever to allow himself to be seized and dealt with by the ordinary process of native justice; a case is concocted against him by the retainers of the great man; it is agreed that A shall be accuser, B, C, and D witnesses; a complaint is lodged; the Darogah sent to inquire. A.'s property is found in the criminal's house, the Darogah, being properly feed, reports a clear case of robbery, and sends it for trial. The evidence of the witnesses is written down in a corner of the Court by a mohirir, who must also be feed; it is read out and sworn to in the presence of the prisoner; there is no cross-examination; he may protest his innocence as he likes—the evidence is clear, and he goes to gaol for six or seven years, as the case may be.

It is vain to reason with uneducated men about people who are strange to them, and whose manners and customs they do not understand. It is no use telling him that Brown is justified in shutting up a man who has committed no offence for six years, but that Smith is not justified in shutting up a man for six days though all the world admit he richly deserved punishment. Somehow or other the native cannot be brought to see the distinction between the two men. "Cæsar very like Pompey—specially Pompey"—and if he were to give a candid opinion, he would admit that he prefers the illegal justice of the Planter to the very legal injustice of the Civilian. The Planter lives among them—they know his every act, and if they suspect him in dispensing justice of a leaning to his own interest, they understand this and take their measures accordingly. The Civilian lives apart, utterly inaccessible for all practical purposes, and is universally believed by the lower class of natives to be as corrupt as his Omlah. The better class of natives and Europeans know this to be absolutely and entirely false, but it would be impossible for the Omlah to carry on the system on which they thrive, if they could not disseminate and sustain the belief that the

Sahib shares in the bribes they received ; and when they can point to such cases as that of Kaleekota which took place in broad daylight, and which everybody in the district knew all about except the magistrate, and he decided it as he does in fifty other cases, against the known facts, but in conformity with the known bribes, it is difficult to persuade natives that Europeans in power are not as corrupt as their own people. If it were possible to conceive such a thing, and an independent Commission were established to inquire into the administration of justice in the Zillah Courts of Lower Bengal, with an experienced Planter as chairman, it is just within the bounds of probability that a revelation might be made that would make Mr. Seaton Karr's document pale before it. We have hitherto only had the lion painted by the man. It would be curious to see the man painted by the lion. There are always two sides to a story, hitherto we have only had one. What if after all it should turn out that the great Bengal Civil Service was only ——— what we dare not write.

CHAPTER III.

COVENANTED AND UNCOVENANTED.

THERE is another peculiarity in the position of an Indigo Planter in Bengal, which it is extremely difficult for any one in Europe to understand, but which it is necessary should be thoroughly understood, or the nature of the present crisis must for ever remain a mystery. The best mode of illustrating this will be by an example, and in order not to offend the feelings of any one now living, an example must be taken so far back that all the actors have passed away.

In the year 1829, Robert Maxwell, was collector and magistrate of Jessore, an estimable man in every relation of life, and an excellent servant of the Government. At the same period, Alan Colquhoun Dunlop was the principal proprietor of one of the largest and best managed concerns in the district. By birth, by education, and, more than this, by his integrity and upright

bearing, Dunlop was a gentleman in every respect. From the possession of these qualities he acquired immense influence over the natives ; and, so careful was his own administration, and so strict his supervision over his subordinates, that his and their Courts of arbitration were daily crowded by the natives of the neighbourhood, and justice was dispensed free of expense, but so equitably that no native from the Mcerguson's concern ever thought of appealing to the magistrate's Court at Jessore. However satisfactory this might be to the natives, it was by no means pleasing to Maxwell—practically a large slice of his district had been abstracted from his control. There were two kings in Brentford, and the older and more legitimate monarch chafed at the usurpation of the interloper. What was the immediate cause of the outbreak was never exactly known. Some said Dunlop had neglected to take off his hat to the great man when in the Station ; others, that some busybody had reported some imprudent speech. It is of little consequence what spark set fire to the train. What is known is, that Maxwell, when sitting on the judgment-seat one day, declared that he was determined to bring the proud Planter's nose to the grindstone ; that he would no longer be bearded in his own district by another, and ended by intimating that he would be glad to hear any complaint against him. No sooner said than done. In a very short time there were lodged in Court against Dunlop some six or seven cases of murder, as many of arson, three or four of rape, several for decoity. Robbery, with violence, was a daily occurrence, and the minor offences of kidnapping, coercion, &c., would fill a page to enumerate. Every servant in every factory was a principal in some crime, or accessory before or after the fact to some other. Admitting all these cases to be false, which they were, it will strike every one that there must have been a mass of discontent festering in the concern to produce on a sudden such a cry of complaint. Nothing, however, is so easy to account for. Of course where a concern extends over a district containing one or two hundred thousand individuals, there must be some men who have a grudge against the factory or some of its servants, and who gladly avail themselves of such an opportunity as this to pay it off. But this is not the principal source. Any three

men who can club together 8 annas to buy a stamp, and one of whom can write, can present a petition to the Court. One takes the part of plaintiff, the other two are witnesses. Numbers of men disappear, no one knows how in a country where there is no registration and no police. It is easy to suggest a murder! Fires are common in mat and thatch villages—it is arson! But any crime will do. It is not intended the case should go to trial; but when the Sahib is in difficulty, when it is important that his servants should be released from thralldom, or from attendance at the Station, 30 or 40 miles off, a negociation may be opened, and for a small sum beyond expenses the case may be cancelled. In nine cases out of ten the Planter would willingly pay to get rid of these complaints; but it is like the Byzantine Emperors buying off the barbarians—the more you pay the more certain they are to return. In the present case the matter was too serious, after such a declaration as that by Maxwell. All the men without characters rushed in to share the plunder they felt sure must be distributed to buy them off, but it was overdone—it was too serious. Every servant belonging to the concern had bolted or was in hiding. The police took possession of every factory. It was between the sowing and manufacturing; the indigo was being eaten down by the bullocks of the villages, and there was no one to “abduct them.” If it lasted another month, the season would have been lost, the concern closed, and every one connected with it ruined. A weak man would have temporized, and have been lost. Dunlop was equal to the occasion. He sent his partner to the Station to do what he could to stay the tide. He himself went straight to Calcutta, demanded an interview with Lord William Bentinck, told his story, and his Lordship, after listening patiently, promised to inquire. What steps he took to do this were never known, but the effect was that a few days afterwards Maxwell’s Sheristadar appeared in Calcutta, and sent a message to Dunlop, to say that he wished to speak to him privately on secret business of importance. Dunlop refused absolutely to hold any private communication with him, but offered to see him in the presence of witnesses, and on the understanding that he might make what use he pleased of what was said. The poor

man twisted and wriggled, and tried every possible expedient to turn Dunlop from his purpose, but in vain. So at last he confessed that his mission was to say that if Dunlop would not go back to Lord William, or say anything more about it, he was willing to make it up, and settle the whole business. This was instantly reported to his Lordship, and the result was that in a few days afterwards Dunlop received a note from his partner, saying, "You may return at once to the factories. Maxwell called on all the cases against you and the factory servants this morning, and *dismissed the whole.*" Maxwell was promoted, and there the matter ended.

Many on reading this narrative will exclaim, how very badly Maxwell behaved in this matter—how wrongly. They never were more mistaken. Maxwell's only fault was, that he was a Civilian, and he only did what every member of the service would have done in like circumstances, if he had had the courage. He felt what he conceived to be his legitimate influence interfered with; he determined to recover it. He made his spring; thanks to the energy of Lord William Bentinck, it failed. But after all, he was only following the precedent set a few years before by one of the best of men, and one of the highest ornaments of the service.

When Mr., afterwards Lord Metcalfe, was appointed Resident at Hyderabad, he found everything in disorder and confusion. In the stern exercise of what he conceived to be his duty, he dismissed a Minister who was a favourite with the Sovereign, and put up one whose principal merit was that he was devoted to himself. He insisted on the finances being reformed, expenses reduced, the administration of the provinces improved, and fifty other things, all right and proper no doubt, but singularly distasteful to the Nizam and his Court; and which rendered him more hateful to this corrupt Court than perhaps any one who had preceded him.

Before he arrived there, an English firm had been established at Hyderabad, under the title of William Palmer & Co.'s, a branch of Palmer & Co., of Calcutta. With the command of a very long purse, the firm lent money to the Nizam and his courtiers, on what they considered singularly easy terms, and became

in consequence not only popular but influential. When the Resident stormed, and insisted that the contingent should be paid and the finances reformed, they came forward and offered to lend the money required at 12 per cent., or less than half the usual rate in that country. When the revenue was in arrear they were at hand, and ready to assist the State in all its difficulties. To most men it would have occurred that this was just the engine that was wanted to reform the finances, and to equalize the inequalities of a reckless native mismanagement. By the introduction of European capital, the burden of interest might be reduced one half; by their regularity and business habits the vices of the administration might be reformed. If the State was to be saved, this seemed to be the means. This was not the view the Resident took. Anything was better than that there should be two Kings of Brentford. While the Resident was scolding, reforming, and cutting down expenses, and making himself as disagreeable as possible, the Merchant was advising, assisting, lending money, helping to collect the revenue, and doing all that could be done to make himself useful and agreeable. The same obtuseness which prevents the Ryot from distinguishing so clearly as he ought to do between the Civilian and the Planter, prevailed also at Hyderabad. They did not appreciate as they ought to have done, the difference that existed between the Civilian who was "Resident," and the merchant who was only "Residing." The one was a monitor and a master, and they got out of his way whenever they could; the other was a friend and guide, and they clung to him in spite of his caste. It soon, in fact, became apparent that Palmer & Co. had more influence at the Court of Hyderabad than Sir Charles Metcalfe. It was impossible that this could be tolerated. The Resident made his spring, and crushed the firm.

The ruined merchants applied to the Governor-General. Unfortunately for them the Marquis of Hastings was not a Lord William Bentinck. He was angry, pouted a little, but he wanted to go home and not to be bothered, so he was reconciled to the Resident, and left the Firm to its fate.

Baffled in this direction, the merchants next appealed to the India House against this act of Pro-consular tyranny. If the

Court had listened, they might have been called on to compensate. They were powerful enough then to resist, and to prevent Parliament too from taking up the case. Without compensation, without even a hearing, their wrongs are now buried in oblivion, and scarce even serve as a warning to those who may be rash enough to measure their strength with the Great Bengal Civil Service.

It is not very long since the public in England were startled by an exhibition of feeling on the part of the Governor of Madras, which seemed to them strange and unaccountable, though, had they resided in Bengal, they would have known at once what it meant. When a Bengal Civilian, as Sir Charles Trevelyan was, saw an "uncovenanted" Wilson proposing to restore the Finances of India, on principles unknown to the crude, political economy of the Civil Service, and to introduce reforms unheard of in their antiquated repertoire, his wrath knew no bounds. All the blood of the Bengal service boiled in his veins. In spite of his long residence in Europe, and his long official life, the feelings of the "twice born" rushed back in all their pristine freshness, and he made his spring. Thanks to the prompt decision of the Home Government, it was not fatal; but it inflicted a wound that seriously crippled the usefulness of the measures of the "interloper," and caused him trouble and anxiety, which may have hastened his untimely and lamented death.

The last exhibition of this feeling, is the one that most concerns us now, and so far as we can at present see, it promises to be far more disastrous in its results, than any that have hitherto preceded it. It cannot, however, be said that it was unexpected. Those who knew anything of India, felt that the struggle between the old child of Monopoly, and the new born offspring of Free Trade, must some day come to a crisis, though no one pretended to have foreseen what form it would take, nor to predict the result.

During late years, the Planters have been gradually acquiring a large amount of landed property in Bengal. With the property they have been acquiring rights, and like most Englishmen they have not been slow in asserting their rights, or

backward in resisting any infringement of them. Unfortunately for them, Calcutta possesses a free Press, always ready to open its columns to the recital of their grievances. The Planters have been by no means averse to availing themselves of this channel to communicate their sorrows to a sympathising public, and in telling their own story. Sometimes, it is to be feared, they have done so with that tinge of feeling, which few can avoid, when constituting themselves judges of their own case. The Press has not been slow in commenting on these transactions with more or less acrimony, and it must be added, that the Service has not been backward in replying. Few men can wield the pen more readily than the present Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, or are more adepts of sarcastic retort. Gaily has he rushed into the affray, and though he has proved himself a master of fence, he has received some ugly blows, which have by no means improved his temper. Had it been a mere literary contest, it probably would have ended in both parties making themselves ridiculous, and all the world would have laughed, but a struggle of crimination and recrimination between the members of a Despotical Government, and a class of its subjects which the law barely recognises, could hardly end otherwise than this one has done in the ruin of the weaker party.

To accomplish this, however, it was necessary that the supreme power in India should be in the hands of a man as supine and apathetic as the present Viceroy—that he should have a deputy as clever and as reckless as the present Lieut.-Governor of Bengal—that there should be a clique of Civilians about the Government House ready to follow their leader, regardless of the consequences either to themselves or to the country entrusted to their government. It was required also that the question should be so complex, that the authorities at home could be mystified regarding it, and so little understood that Parliament were afraid to meddle, for fear of making matters worse. This fatal conjunction of planets, however, has taken place. John Peter Grant made his spring—Lord Canning is not a Lord William Bentinck, and his victim lies prostrate at his feet.

In order to understand more clearly how all this was done, it

is necessary to go back a little, and to enter into personal matters which ought never to be alluded to, but so completely is all this a mere matter of personal feeling, and so utterly independent of political wisdom, that it is only by explaining how these feelings came into play, that matters can in any way be explained.

CHAPTER IV.

ROTHIEMURCHUS' RANT.

ANY one who cast his eye over the law reports which appeared in the "Times" and other morning papers on the 16th of January last, may have observed a case in Sir Cresswell Cresswell's Court, headed "Bellew versus Bellew and Eden." It wore a very ordinary aspect, and few were aware that whether rightly or wrongly it was supposed by some that the fate of our Indian Empire was more essentially involved in it, than in any judicial investigation since the trial of Warren Hastings. The report simply narrated that the wife of Mr. Bellew left the roof of that celebrated preacher and went to reside with the Honourable Ashley Eden, Member of the Bengal Civil service, and whilom Magistrate of the district of Baraset.

As old Herodotus says, there never was any mischief in the world that there was not a woman at the bottom of it. The "tetrissima causa" in all this disturbance was said to be this lady. Of the Planters in Mr. Eden's district, some were married men, living with their wives—others men of more or less independence, and it is asserted that they refused, or at all events neglected to show that respect to this lady that they were bound to do in their position.

Time wore on, and on the 17th of August, 1860, a rescript was issued by this Magistrate to his subordinate officers in the following terms:—"You will perceive that the course laid down for the police in the Indigo disputes, is to protect the Ryot in the possession of his lands, on which he is at liberty to sow any crop he likes without any interference of the Planter or any one

“ else. The Planter is not at liberty under pretext of the Ryots
“ having promised to sow Indigo for him to enter forcibly upon
“ the land of the Ryot. Such promises can only be produced
“ against the Ryot in the Civil Court, and the Magisterial authori-
“ ties have nothing to do with them, for there must be two
“ parties to a promise, and it is possible that the Ryots, whose
“ promises or contracts are admitted, may still have many
“ irresistible pleas to avoid the consequence the Planter insists
“ upon.” After what has been said above, it is hardly necessary
to say what was the consequence of this proclamation. Every
one understood it as a distinct order on the part of the Magis-
trate, that Indigo was no longer to be cultivated in his district,
and Mr. Eden knew that it would be so understood when he
issued it. In all such cases the bad controlled the good; but
even the best men saw no harm in standing out—the Planter they
thought must soon go down on his knees to them—they could
then cultivate if it suited them, but it would be on their own
terms. The police felt themselves bound to second what they
knew to be the wish and intention of their lord and master, and
took all proper precautions that no Indigo should be cultivated.
(What a harvest of bribes were in prospect !) In a few months
Indigo ceased to be cultivated in Baraset, and the contagion was
extending. The Planters, who saw their property swept from
under them, and themselves brought to beggary, were loud in
their exclamations. Putting two and two together, they
declared that it was because they had refused to fall down
and worship the idol which had been set up in the
Garden of Eden, that judgment had come upon them. In
this they were wrong—doubly, trebly wrong. They were
wrong to assert what, from the very nature of the case, they
knew it was impossible they could prove. It was wrong
and impertinent in men of their position to express any opi-
nion as to the morals or manners of a person so immeasur-
ably superior to themselves, as a Bengal Civilian must, from his
position, be. They were stupidly wrong to provoke the enmity
of a man who held their destiny in his hands. He may only at
first have wished to box their ears to teach them manners; he
now sought to exterminate them. The old race of Planters were

wiser in their generation. When they saw things go wrong they held their tongues ; when they heard the members of the Civil service lauding themselves as belonging to the wisest and most wonderful of human institutions they put their tongues in their cheeks and said nought. They knew their places and the service spared them.

Finding they could get no redress in that quarter, they first appealed to Mr. Grote, the Commissioner, Mr. Eden's immediate superior. He condemned the acts of his subordinate in the most unhesitating manner, but he had not the power to redress the evil that had arisen ; and both parties then appealed to Mr. John Peter Grant, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province. He stuck by his subordinate officer with a courage that does infinite credit to his heart whatever may be said of his judgment. He endorsed the edict, and added—"I am myself of opinion that "the Indigo cultivators (the ryots) have, and long have had, "great and increasing ground of complaint against the whole "system of Indigo cultivation."* He not only thought and said so, but acted energetically on the opinion. The epidemic under his guidance soon spread over all Lower Bengal, but not so rapidly but that a considerable breadth of cultivation had been secured by one means or another. All this would have been destroyed had not the Legislative Council come forward at the last hour and passed a short declaratory Act, legalizing the cultivation of Indigo for six months longer. This enabled the last crop to be gathered in, but not without serious difficulties and heavy deductions.

Meanwhile, Mr. Grant was not idle. It is alleged, not only in the papers, but in a petition solemnly addressed to the Supreme Government, that he was tampering with the sources of justice ; that he had promoted those magistrates who gave decisions under the temporary Act in accordance with the interpretation he put upon it, and removed those who interpreted it in a sense that did not meet his approval. He is accused of putting forward false accusations, more especially in the celebrated case of the forged mooktearnamah, and generally of aid-

* Public letter addressed to Mr. Sconce, 23rd March, 1860.

ing and abetting the Ryots in their resistance to the Planters. All this and much more that is said, may or may not be true. The time is not yet come for giving a judgment; the facts are not yet all before the public; we have not yet heard all that may be said on the other side. It will be time enough to give an opinion on these points when all the evidence is before us; it is only necessary to allude to them now to show the spirit in which the controversy is being carried on. Whether they are true or false, it is certain that in all he has done Mr. Grant has shown all the zeal and fervour of a most uncompromising partizan, and has written on all occasions with a sarcastic bitterness most unfeeling towards those whom, whether rightly or wrongly, he has ruined, and which is most unbecoming in a person placed in his high position.

If it was not so serious in its consequences there would be something grimly ludicrous in the accounts that have been published of a Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, pretending to go and survey an extension of the Eastern Bengal Railway, in order that he might make a triumphant progress through his emancipated provinces and proclaim a millenium of insolvency to all who would worship him as the tenth Avatar! and preaching his new socialistic theory of government to a set of men as little removed from the state of barbarism as can well be conceived, and whose political horizon is commanded by the wants of the hour.

Shortly after this most successful expedition through the districts of Lower Bengal, the Tirhoot Planters heard with horror and dismay that the Lieutenant-Governor intended honouring their hitherto peaceful province with a visit. By what benign influence this calamity has been averted is not yet known, but it is admitted on all hands that had he gone there he would have brought ruin and misery in his train, as he had in the countries more immediately under his control, for there is not one of the politico-economico sophisms by which he justifies his interference in Lower Bengal which would not apply with equal—possibly with more force—in the upper country. The fact being that the Ryot in Tirhoot receives actually less than his fellow cultivator in Bengal for the area he cultivates, and not half as much, if

we estimate its value by the mode in which the work is done ; and it is also a fact that all the lands used in Tirhoot for the cultivation of Indigo are far better suited for cereal crops than are nine-tenths of the land used for that purpose in the Delta—Why, then, does he too not rebel?

It cannot be that he is in debt to the Planter, and so bound down by his agreements that he cannot free himself without Government assistance, because the arrangement the Tirhoot Planter makes with his Ryot is to pay him a certain fixed sum for cultivating a begah for Indigo ; the Planter finds the seed, and takes the risk of the crop, so there can be no indebtedness on the part of the Ryot, and as very few have agreements binding beyond the year, the planter has no hold whatever on him after the season is over.

It cannot be that the Planters combine and oblige them to cultivate by force or fraud, and simply because the more manly up-country Ryot would not for one moment stand, what the more womanly Bengalee absolutely requires, before he ever thinks of performing an agreement. The truth is, that when an up-country man makes an agreement, or borrows money, he means to perform the one, and to repay the other, either in kind or in cash ; the Bengalee never dreams of doing either, except under pressure.

The consequence of this higher character of the up-country native is that truth is more respected, the laws better administered, and property more secure ; latial fights, kidnapping, and all the peccadillos alleged against the Bengal Planter, are and always were entirely unknown to his brother in Tirhoot, (though frequently the same individual) and would be unknown in the lower country, if the people were as honest and the laws as well administered. It must also be added that the Tirhoot Ryot finds that in the long run Indigo cultivation pays him better than any other crop he can grow, and so the Bengal Ryot found and thought till the Civilian undeceived him. From all these circumstances, it happens, that up to the time when the last mail left, Tirhoot was as contented and as prosperous as Bengal was before the Civilians stirred it up, and will continue as uncomplaining, unless Mr. Grant either goes there himself, or sends his emissaries to excite

the people against the Planters. If he does—he is very clever—he may be as successful there as he has been in Bengal.

While passing the short Act respiting the Planter for six months, the Government took another step, which was the wisest and most proper they could take under the circumstances. They appointed a Commission of five members to inquire into the whole question of Indigo planting, and to suggest what measures, if any, were necessary for its regulation. It may have been unavoidable, but the composition of the Commission was most unfortunate. The Chairman, Mr. Seton Karr, was a Civilian, a Secretary of Mr. Grant's, known to chime in with his views; the second member, Mr. Sale, was a missionary, a member of that body, some of whom, Germans by birth, had come forward as the public accusers of the Planters, and had committed themselves to assertions which in nine cases out of ten crumbled into dust when inquired into by the Commission, and only served to prove how far that body were pledged, and to what lengths they were prepared to go to gain their ends. The third member was a Baboo, in Government employ—like most natives, too wise in his generation to kick against the powers that be, and perhaps in the bottom of his heart not sorry the Planters should go, and if the truth must be told, even that the Civilians might follow soon after. As soon as their names were announced, it was surmised how these three members would vote, and they have not disappointed public expectation.

The fourth, Mr. Temple, was a Punjaabee Civilian. Having never resided in Lower Bengal, he had none of that jealousy of his fellow-countrymen which characterises his brothers in the service, and as little conception of the lawless condition of Lower Bengal, or that the character of its inhabitants differed so essentially from that of the natives he had been accustomed to deal with. He did not care to dispute Mr. Karr's preamble, but granting it, he saw that if the alleged evils existed, they could easily be remedied by a better administration of the laws, and that it was not necessary to create a revolution to assist the police. He reported—not in these words—that the mode of roasting pigs by burning houses was expensive, uncertain, and dangerous—that the improvement in kitchen ranges in civilised countries

was such, that roast pork might be had at a moderate expense for fuel, and no risk even to the cook !

The fifth member, Mr. Fergusson, a merchant, who though never a Planter, nor then interested in any factories, had been connected with Indigo for more than 40 years. He denied the indictment of the Preamble as unfair and unjust, and not warranted by the evidence, but concurred in the recommendations of Mr. Temple. He reported that even if the evils alleged against the Planters did not exist, additional courts and additional means for administering justice could not be anything but a benefit to both parties, but especially to the Planters. If the evils did to any extent exist, this was the proper and reasonable mode of remedying them.

The Report was thus divided :—Three out of five were in favour of doing nothing, but of letting revolution take its course. They were the majority, and their views coincided with those of the Lieutenant-Governor. Lord Canning went up the country, and Mr. Grant was left to take his course, and a most successful one it has been. During the short 18 months that it has lasted, there has been more fighting, more broken heads, more outrages against property and person than during the previous 18 years were alleged against all the Planters and all the latials in all the districts. So frightful have these become, that the military have been called out to hold provinces, in which, when they were held by the Planters, no soldier was ever seen, and no disturbance ever took place that could not be quelled by the civil authorities.

The ryots, reading Mr. Grant's proclamations by the reflection of his actions, have put upon them the only interpretation any man who knows the Bengallees could ever fancy they would put upon them, and have universally refused to pay the Planter rent for the land he holds in talook or perpetual lease,

The Indigo agreement was a small and frequently a very profitable grievance. Rent is always in all countries an intolerable nuisance, and Government having declared that Indigo planting should be abolished, and that all agreements with Planters were null and void, why should he pay him rent? The one is no more a debt than the other ! On this perfectly logical conclusion they have acted, and by the last accounts were still

holding out. How far this interpretation will suit the purposes of a government which is sending home piteous appeals to this country for money to meet their deficiencies remains to be seen. They may depend upon it it will not stop where it is, and the Ryots, who with the assistance of Government, are enabled to escape the payment of rent to the Planter, will try next what they can do with their own Zemindars, and the Government may find its own revenue deficient at the very moment when it is most important that it should be paid with punctuality.

There is no means available for ascertaining to what extent loss has been sustained from these sources hitherto, but by the last account in the four districts of Nuddea, Jessore, Pubna, and Fureedpore twenty-seven concerns had been successfully closed, the blocks of which were valued at £1,244,000, and the annual produce at 25,165 md. or about half-a-million sterling. Pretty well for a beginning by a Government on the brink of insolvency, and which wants every shilling it can obtain, either from its own subjects or from any one who will lend it a few rupees to go on with, but who still think they may indulge in the expensive luxury of a revolution, in order to cure evils which, if they do exist, are merely the effects of the imperfect administration of the laws by the present Government itself.

CHAPTER V.

PRICE OF PRODUCTION—INDIGO.

PUTTING on one side all the criminations and recriminations which fill nine-tenths of Mr. Karr's voluminous Report, the whole gist of the complaint against the Planter is contained in paragraphs 50 and 51, which state that "Another inequality is
 "this: the planter on a fair calculation looks to a return of two
 "seers of dye from 10 bundles of plant, which is the fair average
 "of one begah. Two seers would sell for 10 rupees when In-
 "digo is selling at 200 rupees a maund. But the return from

“the same 10 bundles to the Ryot could not be more than rupees 2·8 at four bundles the rupee. 51. *Thus the Planter would look to derive from the contract about four times the profit which could ever fall to the Ryot.*” What is alleged is this, and what has been asserted from the beginning is that the Planter’s bargain with the Ryot is an unfair one—that he does not pay for the plant what he ought to do, and is obliged to use force and oppression to obtain the fulfilment of an unjust and unprofitable contract. It is, in fact, the old quarrel between labour and capital. Something was said about it by the Gracchi in the old Roman times. It was the root of the French jacquerie and of the Revolution of ’89. It was the watchword of Louis Blanc and Ledru Rollin in 1848, and we hear a good deal spouted in the same strain as the Indigo Report whenever a strike takes place in this country. The great peculiarity of an Indian strike is that both the capitalists and their victims were contented and peaceful when war was stirred up between them by Mr. Eden and his class; and the Lieutenant-Governor of the province condescended to take upon himself the role so recently and so brilliantly performed in this country by Mr. Potter, and his subordinate civilians took upon themselves the functions usually performed in this country by trade delegates.

If the Government of this country had only had the courage to do as much for the oppressed building trade during the strike last year that Mr. Grant has done for the Ryots; had they only endorsed Mr. Potter’s statements and arguments, it is possible we might have seen something equally grand. There is, however, in this country, a strong feeling that labour and capital should be left to settle their bargains without the interference of Government, and a sort of pious horror of raising a revolution to settle the price of a yard of brickwork. It remains to be seen whether the result of the Bengal strike will encourage a bolder line of policy on the part of our timid rulers.

If we put the political economy of this Report into English it is equivalent to this:—When the value of wheat in the sheaf is equal to 40s per quarter, the 4 lb. loaf should be sold for 4d. This doctrine is not new, but when proposed the farmer objects that he must carry and stack his corn, must thrash it and take

it to the mill. The miller objects to grind it without being paid for his outlay and trouble. The baker complains that he has rent and wages to pay, to find fuel and to support his family, and consequently insists on getting 80s for what cost 40s in the sheaf.

Mr. Grant would teach him better; but meanwhile let us see what the Planter does with his money.

The argument in the Report is, that while Indigo is selling at 200 rs. per maund, the Planter gives the ryot only 50 rs., and puts 150 rs. into his own pocket—lucky dog! What does he do with it? He certainly does not send it to the credit of his account with his agent or remit it home—or one year's profit would send every planter home with his fortune. It is not asserted he spends it in riotous living. It is spent, however; and if the Civil service do not know what becomes of it, most men of business have a shrewd guess how it disappears. To explain this, it is necessary to divide the expense of a maund of Indigo under several heads, thus—

- 1st. Cultivation.
- 2nd. Factory expenses.
- 3rd. Law expenses.
- 4th. Interest and charges.

For the first we will take the Commissioner's estimate, 50 rs. per maund.

The second it is extremely difficult to estimate, as no two concerns are alike in these respects; but the following will at least explain what the usual items are. It is composed firstly of a European establishment, which on an average of a concern producing 1000 maunds of Indigo, may be estimated at 1000 rs. per mensem, this sum including commission, horse allowance, &c.

The Native establishment of each factory may be taken as follows:—one gomastah at from 15 to 20rs., one mohirir at 10, a second ditto or buxee at 6, 4 ameens at 7, and 8 classies at 5; a chowkeydar at 8, and a second ditto or peon at 5: with extra assistance say 120 rupees per month. This, for 8 factories, would be 960. Some of the factories would not, of course, have so full an establishment; but to this must be added the Head Quarter Staff—so that we shall not be far wrong in putting it at 1000

per month, the same as the European establishment, or 12 rs. per md. The two together making 24 or 25 rs. per maund. The manufacturing charges have never been put down below 20 rs. per maund. The recent rise in the price of labour has made it 25 at least. Repairs and buildings are never less than 5000 rs., or say 5rs. per maund. Seed, if not given, is always sold at a fixed price, and leaves a loss to the factory of say 3 rs. per maund. Rent, and the loss on farm villages, is another serious item in some concerns, and varies from 5 to 15 rs. per maund, say 10. Add for live stock, petty cash, incidental expenses, and sundries, 10 per cent on outlay, or say 12,000 rs,—or, to be moderate, say 10 rs. per maund. We have thus for factory expenses 77 or 78 rs. per maund. This probably may be extreme in some items, but of that hereafter. Law it is obviously impossible to estimate; one year's fees to police and omlah, with law expenses, may not be more than 3 or 4000 rs.—another year they may be 10 or 20,000; let us say 5000, or 5 rs. per maund.

Interest and Charges—A factory producing 1000 maunds of Indigo is—or rather, was—worth 3 to 3½ lakhs of rupees. The interest of this, at ten per cent., is 30,000 rs. or 35,000 rs. The interest on an outlay of say 120,000, with commission and charges averages about 16 or 17 per cent., say 20,000 rs. If we add these items together, it will be found that the price of a maund of Indigo is composed of—

Cultivation charges	. . .	50
Factory expenses, say	. . .	75
Law	5
Interest and charges	. . .	50

180 rupees,

Leaving, consequently, when Indigo is 200 rs. per maund, 10 per cent. profit to the Planter to cover risks of seasons and the chances of a fall in price. This would, perhaps, suffice, if a Planter got a fair start, and had one or two good seasons at the beginning of his career, and if Indigo could be maintained at 200 rs. per maund. But if he begins with bad seasons or lower prices, he becomes a worse slave to the agent than the ryot does

to the Planter, and quite as much in need of a revolution to save him from the effects of his involvements.

As before explained, 200 rs. is quite an exceptional price of Indigo. For many years its average price was not more than 150; and if we take 175 rs., we certainly take a fair and high average. And if the above statement is at all near the truth it leaves no profit to the Planter, and no margin out of which a larger price can be paid to the ryot. But, if he must be paid more, the money must be got somewhere, or saved from some other quarter.

Any man of ordinary abilities, and with any knowledge of business, looking on the above statement, would see at once how the case stood. The price of Indigo being settled in Mincing Lane by circumstances over which no one has any control, there is nothing to be done in that direction; but a wise man, wishing to benefit the ryots, would first try and find out if nothing could be done to economise in the "factory expenses." If the European establishment is too high, something might be saved there. But, as the good management of a concern generally depends on the efficiency of its European establishment, it may be very bad economy to cut in this direction; and whatever is saved in that direction must be added to the Native establishment, for the rise in the price of everything in Bengal has forced a corresponding rise in wages and salaries of all sorts; so that though you may decrease the number you must increase the rate per head to even a greater extent. There is no saving to be made here, nor is there in manufacturing charges. In some instances Planters have been obliged to raise the wages of coolies from 4 to 8 rs. per month, so as nearly to double the manufacturing charges, while the demand for skilled labour consequent on the extension of railways have fully doubled the expenses of repairs and materials. This rise in the price of every thing tells on every item of factory expenditure; and it may safely be asserted that if in former years it was possible to keep down factory expenses to from 60 to 65 rs. per maund, it is not possible now to screw them below 70 to 75 rs. per maund.

There are three items in the above accounts, however, for the

extent of which the Government is more or less responsible. With anything like security of property, it would not be necessary to take or farm villages at such a loss. It is true this is a great benefit to the ryot as he pays less rent, and pays it to a landlord whose interest it is to protect and cherish him, and who, being a European, and consequently in spite of all that may be said against him by his own countrymen, is a fairer dealer and a more just master than any Bengallee. It is nevertheless a serious item in the expenditure of many concerns.

The law expenses are wholly under Government control. With an efficient police and cheap and speedy justice, this item might be reduced to a minimum; but the great saving must be in interest and charges. There is abundance of money to be had in London at 5 per cent., and there are very considerable sums obtained for the purpose of Indigo planting at that rate, and with a consolidated charge for commission and expenses amounting altogether to less than one half of what is usually paid for these items in Bengal, and money can be obtained to any extent on these terms, *when the personal security of the borrower is good.*

Here then was a practical issue; any man of common sense and wishing the ryots well, would at once have said:—Now I see my way—I will make landed property so secure that I will render it unnecessary to take villages in which there is such a loss; I will so improve the police and the administration of justice that “law expenses” shall disappear, and I will render Indigo property so secure, that the Planter shall be able to borrow on mortgage of his block at 5 per cent.; and I will thus save 30 or 35 rupees per maund. I will insist that this be given to the Ryot. Need he have added the last sentence? The Planter would have been only too happy to give it, and have blessed the man that enabled him to do so.

This would have been the legitimate action of the Government, and nothing would have been so easy as to carry it through, because it would have conciliated every interest, and every one would have aided in carrying it out.

If instead of 50 rupees per maund, the Planter had been able to distribute 80 or 85 among his ryots, the crop would

have paid so largely that every ryot would have been anxious to cultivate. There would have been no need of Ameens and Classees to hunt him up, and make him plough, he would not have baked his seed nor sold it to the native factory; he would not have allowed his bullocks to eat down his crop; he would have exerted himself to save it from being drowned as the river rose, and endeavoured to bring it to the factory in the best possible condition.

The Planter would have been in the seventh heaven; his crop secure; his profit certain; no more squabbling or fighting; every one around him pleased, and all getting legitimately rich together.

The Government would have gained as much as others; their rents would have been paid with regularity; their customs and taxes easily collected and hourly increased; their people contented and prosperous.

If Mr. Grant could not have accomplished all this himself, he might at least have laid such a foundation as would have secured its ultimate realization. This was the last thing Mr. Grant and his associates thought of attempting. By hasty and ill-judged proclamations and appeals to the feelings and passions of the natives, they at one fell swoop rendered Indigo property so insecure, that those who before were willing to lend on its security at 8 or 10 per cent., would not now look at it under 12 and were asking 15 per cent. The Agents who before were content with 16 per cent. "interest and charges," advanced the money most unwillingly at 20 per cent.

It became necessary, in order to secure any cultivation, to take any villages that might be offered at any rent that might be asked, and the fees to the police, and Omlah must be doubled if the Courts were to be approached, after it was understood the Civilians had declared their intention of ruining the Planters, while on the other hand, the cry of the Civilians was, you have your only remedy at law.

By this course of action, at least 25 or 30 rupees have been added by Government to the cost of the production of Indigo. In some cases it would be fairer to say 50 rupees, and where is this money to come from? The price is fixed, the factory ex-

penses cannot be reduced. Either the Planter or his Agent must pay it out of their own pockets, or it must come out of the share of the Ryot. The real fact is, the Planter must be utterly ruined unless he can work off his old balances, and can now force the ryot to work for half the remuneration he was wont to receive. Instead of having 50 rupees to distribute among his ryots, he has now only 25, or more probably only 20. He cannot get money, he cannot coin it. It does not exist. If then a fall in the price should occur, say to 180, one bad season, any accident, and he is ruined. But this does not help the ryot, the truth being that the effect of Mr. Grant's legislation has been to transfer both the ryot's share, and that of the Planter, to the money-lender and the lawyer, and even they are not benefited, for even the highest interest does not compensate the capitalist for the badness of the security.

CHAPTER VI.

PRICE OF PRODUCTION—RICE.

Notwithstanding all his power and all the animus of his secretaries, Mr. Grant would never have been able to raise the ryots to the extent he did, had it not been for the extraordinary rise in the price of rice, which occurred about two years ago. It has puzzled the best commercial heads to say to what this sudden dearness is to be ascribed. Some think it owing to the extraordinary influx of specie, which occurred immediately after the mutiny, and others to the disturbance of relations between the provinces, which threw the burthen of supply on the principal rice-producing districts; but whatever the cause, the effect is certain that the price of rice has more than doubled within the last few years, while the price of Indigo, from the nature of the arrangements under which it is produced, remains practically nearly the same.

Under these circumstances, it is no wonder that the ryot

should wish to abandon his Indigo cultivation, and to turn at least that portion of the Indigo fields which were fit for the purpose, into a rice cultivation. It is probable that, at the time the outbreak took place, it may have paid better, and if so it is a hardship that a man should grow a less profitable crop when he might produce one that would pay him better. Under any civilized Government, and where there was any security of property, the thing would have been easily adjusted. Where the Planter is Zemindar, which is nearly everywhere, it would have paid him better to have allowed his ryots to grow rice, if he could have arranged for a share of the profits; where he was not proprietor it might have paid him better, instead of his Neez* cultivation at least, to have grown rice himself, or let the ryots grow it for him on some equitable arrangement. Indigo is by no means so profitable a speculation that any one would prefer it to the easier and far more certain crop of grain if he were allowed to realize that. But here the Government step in and say—Oh! no, we cannot allow this. The ryot is the sole and only proprietor of the land; his rent is fixed in perpetuity, and as long as he pays that no one can interfere with him.

After this declaration there was nothing left but for the Planter to hold on by what he had. Forty years' use had given him a sort of prescriptive title to sow Indigo in certain lands. The Ryots were his debtors, and to the debt was attached a condition to sow Indigo for the factory; so that he had, by custom, acquired a certain sort of title, and he felt that if he once gave way, if he once admitted the smallest flaw, the deluge would soon flow in and overwhelm him.

Throughout all their reasonings on the subject, the Civilians insist on asserting that whatever applies to Neez cultivation, must also apply to Ryottee, and as all their reasoning as to expenses and losses is based on this fallacy, it is necessary to point out the difference, which is indeed so great, that if they had not shown such ignorance on other points it would be difficult to believe they were sincere in this.

* The word Neez, or private, is used to describe the lands which the Planter cultivates himself, in contradistinction to that cultivated by the Ryots under their agreements, and called Ryottee.

In the first place, every farmer knows that a man that cultivates only one crop, has no chance against a man who cultivates several, for the simple reason that after that crop is sown, his cattle have nothing to do but to eat their heads off, and his servants to sit with their hands before them till it is ripe. It is only by having various crops cultivated at different seasons, that he can find constant employment for all, and so make each bear its proportion of the fixed charges of the farm.

Let us suppose, for instance, a Planter with a large private cultivation, and he will require, at least, say 1000 bullocks. The first thing that strikes one is the impossibility of any Planter, even with any reasonable amount of assistance, superintending such a herd, and getting a fair amount of work out of them, especially in a climate like India, where Europeans cannot be out in the open air all day.

The next point is, that though he may keep them fully employed from November to March, they must necessarily be idle from the time the Indigo is sown till the land is dry again after the subsidence of the inundation ; for more than nine-tenths of the plant being brought in boats, they are not required for that service in Lower Bengal.

A third point is, that during the half-year in which they can be employed, they are too many when the ground is hard and cannot be touched, and too few at seasons of pressure, such as the sowings, which must be completed in 48 hours after the first rains, or the season is lost. The way Planters have hitherto met this last difficulty, is by hiring the bullocks of the ryots. To do this, however, it is necessary to make an advance, without which nothing is done, or can be done, in Bengal ; and it is also necessary to have the power of enforcing your contract at the time it comes into play—in other words, fetching the bullocks from the villages—for no Bengalee has the smallest possible idea of ever performing a contract he is not forced to fulfil. But now the Civilians say—"This will never do ; you are seizing the bullocks, kidnapping the men ; you must not interfere with the free and independent yeoman of the plain ; if he does not perform his contract, our Courts are open to you !" To this the Planter objects, that unless the contract is fulfilled at the moment the

rain falls, the season is lost ; that a suit in Court will take a month, it may be six months, to decide, and after having spent, it may be £10 in law costs, he may find that the whole property of the capitalist with whom he contracted is not worth the ten shillings he originally advanced. There is no help for it, the law must be respected ; so in addition to the greater expense, for the reason stated above, it seems likely that the Neez cultivation may become impossible, from the meddling of the officials.

On the other hand, there are one or two small items which are sedulously kept out of sight by the Civilians, but which tend to diminish the expense to the Ryot a good deal. The first is, that if the stumps are left, the ryot gets a crop of Indigo seed from the land for which the Planter pays at the fixed rate of 4 rupees per maund. If the stumps are removed, he sows the land with mustard, kollai, or some cold weather crop, which he cuts before the time for sowing Indigo arrives, or with the October sowings he throws in a crop of wheat, barley, or seed, which he cuts in January, and the proceeds of which goes into his pocket.

But the great fact is, that only from 1-16th to 1-20th of the cultivated land of Bengal is sown with Indigo at all, and consequently the power of ploughs and bullocks that is required to cultivate 15 or 19 begahs with rice or any other crop, can cultivate one with Indigo at a very small expense ; indeed, considering that the ryot does it at his own time, and does it in the most slovenly and careless way, practically it costs him next to nothing.

All the above reasoning is based on the assumption that a rice cultivation pays the ryot better than Indigo, and it is so stated because throughout Mr. Seton Karr's report this fact is assumed as incontrovertible ; and Mr. Grant, in his minute on that report, not only endorses it, but after his triumphant appeal to Lord Minto's minute, and the delinquencies of four Planters in 1810—which, by the way, have as much to do with the real question at issue as the acts of the three tailors in Tooley-street—his whole reasoning is based on this assumed datum, and over and over again he alleges it as justifying his interference. As it

is in fact the real charge against the Planter, we must try, even at the expense of being considered unnecessarily prolix, to put this question in its true light.

The first fact that strikes us on the threshold of the inquiry is, that while the Commission was sitting, rice of a certain quality was, from some cause or other, selling at R. 2.8 per maund; while by the last advices the same quality is selling at just half that price, at R. 1.4 per maund; and as the ordinary average price of rice to the ryot on the spot is from 8 to 12 annas per maund, it is possible we may see it at that again before long. Unless, indeed, the famine, which Civilian mismanagement has just got up in the North-west Provinces, comes in time to aid their calculations. At all events, the fall of 50 per cent. in the price is something in the meanwhile, and it is just possible that this slight incident may in itself have upset all the Civilian calculations—but let that pass!

So strong is Mr. Grant on the point of price, that he adds to his minute an appendix, in which he gives at length his reasons for stating that the loss to the ryot in cultivating Indigo instead of Rice is enormous. In this he quotes certain calculations by the Hon. Ashley Eden, which prove that by cultivating Indigo instead of tobacco or any such crop, the ryot loses 20 rs. 6 annas per begah. Here is a discovery that ought to spread joy and felicity all over Bengal. Instead of 20 rupees, which we showed above was all a Planter could hope to gain by cultivating 20 begahs to produce one maund of Indigo, here are 400 at his disposal, or twice the full price of a maund of Indigo, without deducting any charge for cultivation, manufacture, &c. &c. In other words, instead of £200,000 a year, which is probably as much net profit as the Planters get out of any crop, here are £4,000,000 a year pure profit, if they will only forsake their wicked ways, and cultivate tobacco instead of Indigo.

“O fortunatos minium sua si bona norint.”

It is true Mr. Grant rejects the calculation of his deputy as excessive, so we will not lay any stress upon it; but we thank him for quoting it, as it shows how utterly ignorant Mr. Eden is of the most elementary principles of business or political

economy, and how childish the reasoning was on which the hub-bub was got up.

Mr. Grant's own calculation is "that the net loss of the ryot in Indigo comes out at R. 7. 1." Even this is rather a startling fact, for the conclusion is that the silly Planter prefers a profit of one rupee per begah by the cultivation of Indigo, which we have shown above is all he can expect—and which by the way he does not get out of his Neez—to making seven rupees per begah from sowing rice, which of course he could do in his Neez cultivation if he chose; in other words, instead of 20 rupees per maund, he might from the same land get 140 rupees, which no maund of Indigo under any circumstances could give him. There are Planters in Bengal who for the last twenty or thirty years have been labouring under a burning sun, anxious to realize a slight competence to return to their native land, and had they realized 20 rupees per maund on the Indigo, they would not be there now. Did it ever strike Mr. Grant as strange that not one of these hard working men ever thought of trying a little rice cultivation, if only in addition to his Indigo? Being agriculturists, knowing the people, knowing exactly what everything cost, and what it sold for. Is it not strange that it should be left to a Lieutenant-Governor to make this discovery? to a man who never ploughed a field, and never bought or sold a maund of anything? But there is a still more strange phenomenon. According to the statistics of Mr. Grant's own Minute, the natives of Lower Bengal produced last year 10,982 maunds of Indigo; and as this will sell at about 140 rupees per maund, what fools these men must be! Cheaply as they can produce it, it must cost something for cultivation, for manufacturing, for seed, for repairs, &c.; say 80 or 100 rupees per maund. On the other hand, there are no reasons why they should grow Indigo, even if Europeans must or will. They at all events might grow rice, and it is tolerably certain that they would, if they could realize 140 rupees from a certain quantity of land, instead of 40 or 50 which, on the extremest calculation, is all they can now get.

Unfortunately, the statistics of the report are so extremely loose, that it is very difficult to state the question of price, with

such precision as would carry conviction to the mind of any one familiar with the more exact reasoning of Europeans. As it is so important, however, we must try.

In the first place, the average produce of a begah of rice, is stated to vary (in Appendix IV.) from 4 to 20 maunds. The latter is clearly exceptional, the former too low, but on a fair review of the whole, perhaps 6 maunds may be taken. It is more than Mr. Grant takes, if he estimates its value at the then current price of R. 1.4 to R. 1.8 per maund.

The produce of a begah of Indigo, is stated to average from 10 to 12 bundles of plant, and the price at 6 bundles to 1 rupee is say 2 R.; at 4 bundles is say R. 2.8 to R. 3. (It should be observed that the larger concerns are generally those which give the highest price, so that the average is nearer the latter than the former sum);—against 7.1 at which Mr. Grant puts the produce of a begah of rice. This at first sight is sufficiently startling. But, in the first place, it should be observed that the money value of the produce per acre, is not the only test of the value of a crop. The return in cash from an acre of wheat, as compared with one of barley or oats, is very different indeed. A crop of potatoes, or turnips, or peas, show also great differences between themselves; but also differ materially from the produce of cereals; or if a farmer grows hops or cabbages, or has a cherry or apple orchard, he will find these differences increase rapidly on his hands. If he admits Mr. Grant's test, he will have no difficulty in determining which pays him best; though this question puzzles most persons in this country; and if he will follow the advice of the Civilians, he will abandon all, and cultivate alone that article which gives the heaviest yield per acre. It is probable he will be ruined if he does—but let that pass. Let us see if we can explain the above discrepancy from any facts that leak out in the evidence.

In the first place, the normal price of rice in Bengal to the ryot, is not more than 8 to 12 annas per maund, or at 6 maunds to a begah, say, R. 3. to 4.8, and from this has to be deducted the expense of shelling, which falls on the produceer, and he has also to provide the quantity required for seed, which

must also be deducted. So that from these causes the real discrepancy cannot in fact even amount to 1 rupee per begah, and may frequently be the other way.

In the next place, the preparation of the rice lands is extremely careful, almost like garden cultivation; that of those devoted to Indigo, as above remarked, extremely slovenly. If the Indigo lands were as carefully prepared as the rice lands, the produce would be from 20 to 24 bundles per begah, and the Planter would too gladly, and generally does pay at the rate of 4 bundles, or R. 5 to R. 6 per begah, and in that case Indigo would pay best, and the produce per begah be largest.

It must also be remarked that the chur lands, which are those best suited for Indigo, are not suited for rice; and the high "matial" lands are also unsuited for profitable rice cultivation, and the one must lie waste, and the other return to the primæval jungle from which they were rescued by the capital and enterprize of the Planter, if Indigo ceased to be cultivated; and this has already frequently occurred.

It may also be added that though the price of rice in the bazaar may be quoted at 8 to 12 annas per maund, or even higher, the ryot never sees a penny of this.—Where there are no Planters there is no cash.—One portion of his crop goes in payment of rent, another in payment to the Buniyah or shopkeeper for "necessaries" he has had during the year. In both which transactions the ryot is cheated to the extent of at least 50 per cent. of the value of his produce, and has no possible means of redress. He consumes a certain portion and retains another for seed, so that altogether it comes to this, whatever the price may be he gets enough left him to feed himself and family, and whether he has the pleasure of eating rice worth 8 annas or worth 2 rupees per maund is of uncommonly little consequence. On the other hand, if he cultivates Indigo he has only to bring it to the factory. He gets a receipt for whatever he brings, and as sure as the manufacturing is over he is paid in hard cash by the Planter's own hands for whatever he can produce receipts for. It is the only cash he ever sees, and the value of so certain a market for his produce, and the certainty of being paid in cash, are advantages it is almost impossible to overrate in so poor and ill-go-

verned a country as this. It would be easy to say more on this subject, but the above will suffice to show that the discrepancy between the value of Rice and Indigo, as an article of produce, is not so great as Mr. Grant would have us believe, in fact does not exist, and that the oppression which forces the ryot to devote 1-16th of his cultivation to this article is not so frightful under these circumstances, as to require a revolution to remedy its horrors.

If it were otherwise—if the Planter did actually rob the ryot annually of from 5 to 10 rupees per begah. If, indeed, all that Mr. Grant tells us were true, it would be the best possible reason for abolishing the Civil service altogether, and a revolution for that purpose would be perfectly justifiable. If for 50 years they, having absolute control over the whole country, have allowed this iniquity to go on year after year, without in one single instance granting redress to one of their oppressed subjects, it must be confessed that they are the most incompetent set of men who ever undertook to govern a country! If it was incompetence—they claim for themselves the title of fools—if connivance, a worse title must be applied to them, and the Planters are certainly entitled to their places, who, during a whole half century at least, have shown themselves so clever, and so thoroughly competent to manage their own affairs. But, in sober earnest, it is none of this. The bargain between the ryots and the Planters is, on the whole, on an average of years, a perfectly fair and equitable one, and works well for all parties under ordinary circumstances. But, in a country where there is no law, and where civilized men are dealing with others in a very low stage of civilization, it is extremely difficult to adjust a permanent bargain to temporary circumstances; and if the Government of that country, instead of trying to keep things quiet till they return to their normal state, at every moment of disturbed averages, cry “war and haro,” then you see what is now happening in Bengal, and of which that very Government has vet to reap the bitter fruits.

It is hardly worth while to pursue the subject further. The truth is, with a sufficient number of figures, a man may prove anything; and if he is, as a Civilian necessarily must be, perfectly

ignorant of business, he may convince himself of anything. With a knowledge of business, men do not always reason rightly, as for instance, it is not very many years ago that an Indigo Company got statistics and calculations which proved beyond all shadow of a doubt, that if they would only cultivate Sugar instead of, or in conjunction with, Indigo, they would certainly realize from 200 to 300 per cent. profit from the first, instead of the 10 or 20 per cent. they were getting from the latter article. They persevered for two or three years in the attempt, and at the end of that time found they had lost upwards of £30,000, and earned the prospect of losing £10,000 a year! Or take another; a large establishment in London wanted some time ago a contractor for their refreshment department. A clever active Director of the John Peter Grant school, went round all the pastry cooks' shops in the city of London and ascertained the exact prime cost of jam tarts, and Bath buns, how many cups could be decocted out of a pound of tea or coffee, how many slices cut off a ham, how many bottles of six shilling Sherry could be squeezed out of a hogshead of indifferent Cape, &c. The result was the profit was proved to be from 100 to 200 per cent., and in some cases more. He consequently urged on his associates that they should take the matter into their own hands. The more experienced heads overruled this, and gave it to a man who promised to pay them an amount calculated to be about 12 or 15 per cent. of the gross take. The result was, that the contractor lost so much, that he was forced to give it up—the profit was not sufficient to cover the expenses.

When Mr. Grant comes home, which please God he will do before long, he will find his breakfast table covered with prospectuses of Companies for brewing, baking, brush-making, anything and everything. All these prove incontestably from facts and figures, that the profits on trades are so enormous, that by clubbing together it is easy to realize 40 to 50 per cent. by the venture. Men of business put these in the fire. The principal dupes of the schemers are the Bengal Civilians and retired Indian officers, and many a hard-earned fortune has perished in the gulf of the 50 per cents., and no one pities them. They may do what they like with their own. But when they are in the

position of Governors of provinces, their ignorance of business is quite another affair, and it is most sad to think that the destiny of India depends on such crude calculations as those that disgrace the productions of Mr. Grant and his subordinates, Mr. Seaton Karr and the Hon. Ashley Eden.

It no doubt is a misfortune to the Planter that the imperfection of the law does not admit of his raising and reducing the price of his crop concurrently with that of other articles of produce, as it has enabled his enemies in an exceptional moment, when everything was in an abnormal state, to make a home thrust at him, from which he may probably never be able to recover. If he could have waited twelve months longer, the fall in rice noticed above would have brought things back to their usual level, and he either could have shown that Indigo paid the ryot as well as rice, or he would joyfully have abandoned the cultivation of the dye and taken to growing rice himself. His experience hitherto has been that of a Neez or private cultivation of Indigo—putting Ryotty aside for the moment—though it does not pay him 1 rupee per begah, is a better speculation than a Neez cultivation of rice, though Mr. Grant assures him he would get 7 rupees per begah by the exchange.

But when a Government once takes up the cry "*Guerre au château, paix à la chaumière*," the end of the capitalist, whatever form he may take, is not far off; and the Government measures were certain to have killed the Planter in a few years, if persevered in, without the aid of the Revolution, which Mr. Grant's impatience has provoked.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SEPOY MUTINY.

THE answer to all this will probably be an appeal to the great maxim, "*Fiat justitia ruat cælum*." If the oppression of the Planter is such as is asserted by some of the Missionaries, and believed in by the Civil Service, it is better that our Indian

Empire should perish than that we should uphold such a system of iniquity.

When the Civilians quote triumphantly the assertions made by the Natives to the Missionaries, with regard to the general oppressiveness and hardship of being forced to cultivate Indigo for the Planter, they know perfectly well that there is not one of these men who in all probability has not said to the Planter himself, that he was his father and his mother, his God and his protector, that without him he must perish or leave the country, &c. &c. Unfortunately for themselves, the natives of Lower Bengal are quite prepared at any time to state whatever they think will be most agreeable to the person they are addressing, and they state it with a picturesque wildness of expression which is wonderfully impressive to those who do not know that their praise or their blame have as little meaning as the song of the birds.

This will probably be conceded, and no one would have attempted to base any argument upon it had it not been for the action that followed on their expression. No sooner had certain German Missionaries, who brought with them to India those doctrinēs of dreamy impracticable Socialism, which is the curse of their own country, and had preached in the village that all men were equal, and no one bound to serve the other—no sooner had the Civilian declared that no one was entitled to collect from him debts, or to ask for the fulfilment of an agreement, except through the intervention of the Courts of justice—than one and all the ryots rose and shook off the detested thralldom with an unanimity which proves how hateful their previous condition must have been! Fortunately there is a parallel event, which may enable us to form a clearer opinion on this subject than might otherwise be possible.

It is not so long since the great mutiny of the Bengal army took place, but that its principal features are still fresh in the memory of most men. The great characteristic of that event was that a whole army rose almost as one man against the Government they had sworn to serve. Men whose fathers had fought and bled under the Company's standard, who had hoped that their sons might succeed to the post which it had been the

ambition of their lives to attain to, threw at once away pay, pension, rank, honours, all that makes life worth having, and sacrificed all those principles of gratitude and faith, which are as keenly felt by a high caste native as by an European gentleman. Having cast themselves loose from all social ties, these men rushed into crime, murdered their own officers without remorse, and engaged in a death-struggle with their masters. They were beaten and defeated. The mutiny was stamped out, but there was no cry for pardon on the part of the mutineers, no expression of sorrow for what they had done. Their cause was too sacred in their eyes, and they were content to perish rather than return to the allegiance they had left. And why was all this? If we are to judge of causes by their effects, there must have been some frightful oppression at the bottom of all this. Was it that the men were forced into the service—kept there by the fear of frightful retribution if they deserted? Were they brutally treated by their officers, cheated of their pay, defrauded of their honours? Their religion insulted! what was it? Will some Civilian who talks so glibly of the unanimity of the ryots in resisting the oppression of the Planters, explain what causes produced the frightful effects of the mutiny?

In the case of the ryots, we had the preaching of some of the Missionaries, the proclamation of the Government House officials, and the organization of all the bad characters in Bengal going about telling the ryots that they had only to hold out a few months, and that the Planters must come down to their terms, and agree to whatever they asked for, and that meanwhile they were sure of the support of the Government. With such inducements, there is not a single mechanic in Great Britain that would not have “struck” also; but even then all the ryots did was to refuse to pay their debts, and to perform their agreements. If we compare this with what the Sepoys did, and what temptation they had, we can only arrive at the conclusion that if the oppression which induced the ryots to refuse to work is represented by 10, the oppression which drove the Sepoys to the excesses they committed must be represented by 10,000. The truth of the matter in both cases is that we are dealing with a set of excitable Asiatics, as little amenable to reason as chil-

dren, and as liable to panic as a flock of sheep, and it is consequently absurd to judge their actions by the standard of European intellect, and doing so sure to lead to the most fallacious conclusions.

There is another lesson to be learned from the Sepoy mutiny, which has even a more direct bearing on the subject in hand, than to attempt to appreciate the causes of the two mutinies from the relative greatness of their effects. There was a time when from Patna to Delhi every regiment had mutinied, and all civil authority was in abeyance, and scarcely a single military post was ours except the Fort of Allahabad. When even at Calcutta, Barrackpore, and Berhampore, not a single native soldier could be trusted with his arms, and every European was required to watch his native comrade. When the Governor-General hardly dared to face his own body-guard. When every native believed, and many Europeans feared, that the Company's Raj was gone and European rule in India was extinguished for ever. Then was the time for the Ryots to bring forward their complaints. If they had rights to demand, neither the Government nor the Planter would have dared to refuse to redress them. If they had wrongs to avenge, they might easily have murdered the solitary Planter with far more ease than the Sepoy could his armed and dauntless officers. Every one will recollect the outbreak at Benares—the mutiny at Dinapore—the house at Arrah, all events occurring in the midst of Indigo districts—and what was the result? The Planter quietly pursued his usual avocation. Rode out unarmed over his lands during the day, and slept soundly at night in his solitary bungalow. He sowed, he reaped his crops, and despatched them to Calcutta with the usual regularity as if nothing was happening, and made on the whole a fair average season. What is even more wonderful, during the siege of Delhi, the Messrs. Saunders pursued their avocation as Planters in the district of Allyghur, within the sound of the guns fired in that deadly struggle, while Civilians and soldiers were cowering in the citadel at Agra, and any soldier who left the lines in front of Delhi was shot down like a dog, no hand was raised against the solitary Planters. Had the city held out a little longer, they might have despatched their crop in safety,

but when driven out of it, a band of disappointed rebels in passing by, vented their spite by setting fire to the factories, as they did to every village they came across; but what men would not have done the same in similar circumstances? When the Civilians fled in hot haste from Azimghur, and not before it was time to be off; a Planter, Mr. Venables, took charge of the district, and kept order till the turning tide of war enabled them to resume their places.

Some Planters, it is true, perished in the struggle, but it was only those who took up arms and went out to fight side by side with the servants of the Government. Men, all the world over, must take the consequences of their associations, and if Planters chose to keep company with persons so hated as the servants of Government then were, they could only expect the treatment they then got. But the great fact still remains, that during the whole of the struggle not one Planter who stuck to his business, and minded his own affairs only, was injured, or even hindered in the prosecution of his business. Not one word was said of Indigo grievances, or of the oppression of the Planters. Wherever they were numerous there was no disturbance and no mutiny, and their presence was alone sufficient to insure peace and order when the power of Government was in abeyance.

It would be well if the Government of India would ponder over these events before it is too late. If they read them rightly they will probably see what a suicidal policy they are pursuing, not only in a financial but a political point of view, and may discover before it is too late that it is only by the free introduction of free European settlers that India can be held. They not only cost nothing but contribute largely to the exigencies of the State, but they and they only are the class that can ever take root in the soil.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IMPENDING FAMINE.

As it is so extremely difficult to place the matters in dispute between the Planters and the Civil service in an intelligible light before the British public, we may perhaps be excused if we diverge slightly from the subject immediately before us, to look for an illustration of the working of the system in the impending famine in the North-Western Provinces, which will probably occupy the attention of the public in a painful manner for some months to come.

According to the last accounts from India, four great districts in the North-West Provinces, containing between four and five millions of inhabitants, are on the verge of starvation, and many are dying daily of hunger and sickness, consequent on deficient nourishment—and all this, as the *Times'* Correspondent most properly remarks, in consequence of the socialistic tendencies of the Bengal Government.

The last great event of this sort in the Bengal Presidency took place in 1838. In the previous cold weather the usual supply of rain had failed, the crops were consequently deficient, and the ryot capitalists, having no capital to buy food withal, died of starvation in numbers, of which no record was ever made. For the sake of humanity let us hope it never may be known.

The causes of this famine were not then, nor are they now, a mystery to any one. For many years previously, and especially since the passing of Regulation VII. of 1822, the Civilians had been trying to reduce the North-Western Provinces to what would be practically a ryotwar settlement, similar to that existing in that paradise of poverty the Madras Presidency, where famines are of periodic occurrence and of frightful severity. A better system was introduced by Lord William Bentinck in 1833, and if the Regulation IX. of that year had been fully carried out the famine might not then have occurred. Its provisions, however, met with the most direful opposition from the Civil service,

and all that was done in the next four or five years was to unsettle every tenure, to distract men's minds with unexpected changes which nobody understood, and in fact to add uncertainty to the previous evils of a ryotwar tenure; the practical working of the system being that the Civilian claimed two-thirds of the net produce of the land as his right for rent, and his Omlah took as much of the nominal balance as the ryot could be forced to pay.

Under these circumstances, when the rain failed and the crops were short, the inevitable consequences were a famine. The first thing that happened was that the ryots bullocks died. Where the landlord avowedly only leaves the tenant enough to support himself and family, there are of course no stores of provender, no stocks of fodder, and when the soil does not produce the supply required, the animals go first. As his own stock of grain diminished, the ryot naturally turned to see how he could raise some money to buy enough to maintain himself till better times. His land, unfortunately for him, is by order of Government, his indefeasible and inalienable property, he cannot sell, and consequently cannot mortgage it. His real property won't help him in his need; his personal property consists of his plough, value say five rupees, his wife's spinning wheel, value one rupee, a charpoy, two rupees, some cooking utensils, and two brass lotahs. A rich capitalist of John Peter Grant's class, may possess property to the extent of two pounds sterling; the ordinary class say one pound. This in ordinary times would go some way, but, in times of distress, the ryot finds the same difficulty in realising his property, as is experienced by his brother capitalists in Europe. When any extraordinary pressure or panic occurs in Lombard Street, and every man wants to realize his securities at the same time, it is found that purchasers vanish in some mysterious way, and many a solvent firm has been ruined by not being able to turn its property into cash at the moment it was most wanted. So it happened in Bengal in 1838. Ploughs and spinning wheels, and brass lotahs, were a drug in the market; nobody could eat, and nobody would buy them at any sacrifice. So there was nothing left for the poor capitalist, but to drag himself to the nearest

city, in the hopes that the alms of the rich might support him till the rain fell.

Agra was then the capital of the North-West provinces, and the Government were doing something to relieve the necessities of the people, and subscriptions were raised in Calcutta, and among private individuals throughout the country, which were being distributed by Committees in that city. The consequence was, that half the population of the neighbouring districts crowded towards it, and such was the pressure that in a few months, upwards of a hundred thousand souls perished of fever and of starvation within its walls. Not because there was not food to feed them, but because there was not money to buy it. The Government did not feel itself justified in going beyond a certain length, private benevolence was unable to cope with so frightful a catastrophe, and there were no middle men, no landlord class, who had any interest in supporting the poor famishing ryots.

Of course, it will be suggested that all this happened because there was no food in the country available for their support. Nothing can be further from the truth. Bengal was teeming with grain, and the demand from the Upper Provinces had hardly raised the price to an appreciable extent. In front of the citadel of Agra itself, there was a string of boats laden to the gunwale with grain. The supply was amply sufficient for present purposes, and ten times more could easily be obtained, but who was to pay for it? Alas for the poor capitalists, they could not, so they lay down in hundreds on the banks of the river and died of want, and their emaciated corpses clung to the cables of grain-boats, and choked the stream, till the whole air became foetid with the smell of putrifying human beings.*

It may be argued that all this was the act of God, and that it is most unfair to blame the Civil Service for the badness of the season! Let us look at a parallel instance. For the first half century after the Battle of Plassey, the Civilian reigned supreme

* In the last received copy of the "Friend of India," the following paragraph occurs:—

"The first want of the famine-struck districts is—for the present at least—*money*. There is every reason to believe that food is available for purchase at high-rates indeed, but in sufficient quantities."

in Lower Bengal. There was nothing between the ryot and the Government collector of rent, and the result was there was a great famine about every ten years, and a smaller one every five years on an average. The last great event of this class took place in 1795, when it is said one-fourth of the population perished of want. Shortly after this Lord Cornwallis passed the famous Perpetual Settlement Act, the meaning of which was simply to free the provinces then possessed by the English Government from the eternal meddling of a helpless, though well-intentioned Civilian, and from the exactions of his rapacious Omlah. Another half century passed, and you search in vain in the annals of any perpetually settled province. The word famine never again occurs. The rights of labour, capital, and property are left to adjust themselves, and peace and plenty follow in their train; and not only is nine-tenths of the real wealth of India centred in these provinces, but out of their abundance they are always able to supply the deficiencies of the ryotwar provinces to the extent to which they can pay for their assistance.

On theoretical grounds it is, no doubt, difficult to defend Lord Cornwallis's Act. It certainly was hasty, and frequently assigned property to persons who had no real right to it; but, in its general result, it has been by far the wisest and the most beneficial of all the Acts of the East India Company. The Civil service have always writhed under the infliction of an Act that abstracted from their direct control the revenues of the fairest provinces of India. They never ceased to try and abrogate or undermine it. Numberless resumption Acts have been passed, and every begah to which a Zemindar could not prove his absolute title has been resumed, and hatred to this permanent settlement is,—apart from the personal question,—the real basis of the whole of this unhappy dispute. In all their reasoning, Mr. Grant and his subordinates are ringing the changes on their cry, “that the ryots are the free yeomanry of this country, and indeed, strictly speaking, the virtual owners of the greater part of the land in the old cultivated parts of Bengal;”* the Government resumptions, it is presumed, forming the other part. The ryot, it is repeated over and over again, is not

* Para. 33 of Mr. Grant's minute.

only the proprietor of the soil, but the capitalist, the only man in fact the law recognizes. But, to make way for the establishment of his rights, the Planter must first be got rid of, then the Zemindar. When these obnoxious classes are disposed of, Bengal will be like the happy lands of Madras and Bombay, where there is nothing between their pet pauper capitalist and the Civilian, and where the latter consequently reigns in unquestioned supremacy over an abject, though frequently a starving people, separated from him by a vast, immeasurable, and unfathomable gulph. If John Peter Grant and his socialists are allowed to have their own way, it is possible that the latter years of the nineteenth century may be marked by horrors as great as those which disgraced the last half of the eighteenth in the annals of Bengal. Let us hope that there is yet time to save that misgoverned country from anything so atrocious.

But to return to the North-West and the impending famine. Those Civilians who witnessed the horrors of the famine in 1838 set to work in right good earnest, and in a few years the whole of the North-West provinces were practically settled at fair rents, on tenures varying from 20 to 30 years. The work was well done, and is a credit to all concerned in it. In the course of a few years however certain defects began to crop up from the very perfection of the workmanship, as applied to a people in a very low stage of civilization. As for instance, a village was assessed to pay a certain sum to its landlord, he paying a fixed rent to Government, and leaving a considerable sum as his fixed profit. The land was surveyed, the title registered, the rent fixed, and easily recoverable. Under these happy circumstances, the landlord naturally wished to see his son comfortably settled and married with a splendour befitting his rank. This required an outlay of at least 10,000 rupees. That was easily obtained from the native banker on mortgage, and probably at 12 per cent. Next year another child was to be married or a parent to be buried, and more and more money was required, and easily to be obtained, though at increasing rates of interest, till the time arrived when the Mahajun thought he had advanced enough, when he presented a petition to the Court to foreclose. There could be no dispute. The

title was clear, the mortgage regular, the interest in arrear; and the estate passed from the old aristocratic family to the greasy banker in the city bazaar. Since we have taken the trouble to make titles so clear that any one may advance with safety upon them, innumerable estates which have been held by old families for centuries, have passed into the hands of usurers, who have no interest in the people, and consequently we have by this act entailed all the worst evils of absenteeism on the properties they purchase. Whatever discontent there was among the people of the North-West during the great mutiny, arose from this cause; and now its further effect is becoming apparent in the famine. Add to this that the twenty years' tenures are expiring, and the thirty years' leases have not long to run, all in the future is uncertainty, no one knows what may happen next, or what he may be called upon to pay; no one consequently will hoard, and no one will lend. If in these circumstances the crops are deficient, the consequences are easily foreseen, and are exactly what are now developing themselves.

The Government of 1838, horrified at the result of their own doing, undertook, with the most beneficent intention, a number of public works, which they thought would secure them against the recurrence of similar disasters. The completion of the Ganges Canal, for instance, was pushed forward with vigour, and immense sums lavished on its works, and no doubt it will increase the revenue of the Government, and may be a profitable speculation; but it would be just as reasonable to expect that high farming would feed our paupers. The improvement of one man's estate does not enable another poor man to buy food when his unimproved estate will not produce it. It is like the cry we so often hear repeated that railways will grow cotton. Such notions of political economy are very creditable in a Mogul Emperor, or an Eastern despot of any sort; the truth being that neither will roads nor railways grow either cotton or anything else, nor canals feed people, without security of property. In fact there is no principle more generally acknowledged now than that it is the first duty of a Government, and especially of one so situated as the Indian Government is, to grant to its subjects security of life and

property. If it can ensure this great desideratum railroads and canals will follow as a matter of course. Produce will be forthcoming of every sort that a fertile soil and industrious people can produce; wealth and capital must accumulate, and famine and financial difficulties be unknown. The tendency however of the Government of India has lately been in a diametrically opposite direction. By the introduction of a dreamy socialistic system they have unsettled the rights of property, destroyed capital, encouraged antipathies between race and race, and set up the rich and the poor as natural enemies to one another. If they persevere in this course they must take the responsibility of every man that perishes of famine in the North-West, and bear both the loss and the odium which their conduct entails.

When the great famine of 1838 occurred steam communication was not established with India, and the Morning Papers had no Special Correspondents there, so its horrors have passed unrecorded. It is hoped however that the *Times* will send out a Special Commissioner who may enlighten the public as to the causes and effects of this great calamity, in order that we may derive from it instruction how such may be avoided in future. If any uncovenanted spectator is there, let him ask some famishing ryot whether he would prefer to be shut up for a week in a Planter's godown, or be starved to death by a Civilian collector? An Englishman would of course answer that he would rather die ten thousand deaths than submit to illegal punishment, even when he knew he was in the wrong. But it is suspected that the same sentiment is not so strong among Asiatics. An Englishman is brought up under his own laws which he loves, and they are administered by his own people, whom he respects. An Indian is governed by laws he does not comprehend; administered by a foreign race, whom he hates; and a little more or a little less justice or injustice is not very appreciable to his senses. But hunger is not a thing to be trifled with, especially when a man sees his wife wasting away, and hears his children shrieking for food; and it does not alleviate his agonies, or soothe his sorrows, to know that his sufferings are caused by the blundering meddling of a

Socialist Collector, whom he dies cursing in the bottom of his heart.

When the Civil Service are able to fix on the Planters the hundred thousandth part of the misery which the Planters could fix on them if they had the opportunity, it will be time to call out about these iniquities. They have hitherto had it all their own way, but surely the other side must one day be listened to.

CHAPTER IX.

INDIGO AND COTTON.

Jye Jye Juggernaut! The car of the Government Juggernaut rolls merrily along, and the hideous deity sits grinning within, listening with wooden indifference to the cries of the victims who are being crushed beneath the wheels. The Honourable Ashley Eden* has had his revenge, and John Peter Grant has written his name in the annals of India in a manner that must be gratifying to so vain and so selfish a man, though other men might feel rather ashamed of the bad eminence.

On the other hand, perhaps, after all, no great harm has been done to the other party—a few insignificant Indigo Planters have been ruined—but the Insolvent Court will open its door wide to any set of men who are brought down by no fault of their own; perhaps they were not so very prosperous before as not in their secret hearts to rejoice at the relief and the opportunity which other and less precarious employment may afford them. Fever and Cholera soon settle the accounts of those who cannot find employment, and who are forced to nurse in idleness the griefs they cannot cure. Things move fast in that climate and that country, and in a few years the generation who suffered from this raid will have passed away and been forgotten. The sufferer who must remain will be the ryot, who, when his

* Mr. Eden has since been promoted to an important office in the Customs, and now made Special Commissioner to accompany the army to Sikkim.

rent day comes round, and his cattle die, will look in vain for the Planter and his never empty purse, and his never failing aid against all the oppressions to which a poor man must be exposed in a country where there is no law.

The principal sufferer, however, is the Government, which cannot die but must live on and expiate the faults of its subordinates. Since the revocation of the Edict of Nantes—"si magna licet componere parvis," no Government has committed a similar act of folly from the same motives, and none were ever less in a position to indulge their feelings at the expense of their pockets. They have done so however, and the real question still remains, how is India to be governed in future, and how is it to be made to pay its own expenses?

The Civilian theory of how this should be done has, at all events, the merit of simplicity. Let us say they have nothing but European Civilians to govern, and nothing but European Soldiers to keep our subjects in subjection. It is vain to point out to them that the object of governing a people ought to be something more than merely locking up rogues and assisting usurers to collect their debts, which seem practically to be the only duties the Civilian cares to perform, and that an army merely employed to keep down insurrection in a country where there is no external enemy to be found, is not placed in a very dignified or a very useful position. The worst feature of the scheme is, that it wont pay. India in itself is really a poor country, and its people have not in themselves the energy nor the skill to develop its resources, unless under European guidance, and must always remain too poor to support so expensive and so unproductive a mode of government.

It may also be objected to it that such a scheme has never yet been successful. A foreign race merely holding a great country by the strength of its organization, without any admixture with the people, or any ties to the soil, has never yet been a permanent institution, nor does it deserve to be so, and if it is all we look to in India, the sooner our connection with the country ceases the better for all concerned.

Even the old Company, though they hated free settlers with a hate which still lives in the hearts of their servants, never

dreamed of such a mode of government. They settled their Commercial Residents in every corner of the land, they made advances to all classes of cultivators with a lavish hand, and did what they could in their rude monopolizing way to develop the industrial resources of the land, nor were they so absolutely without connection with the people as might at first sight appear. In the old days of the Company, the army was the great national institution. The officers lived then with and among their soldiers, and were on terms of as complete equality and intimacy with them as the Planter is with his servants or ryots. It was not till recently that officers became civilianized and lived apart from their men, and treated them as another race with whom they could have no communication, except on business, and it is by no means clear how much of the late mutiny was owing to his segregation of races. It is of no use the Civilian turning round and asserting that the free settlers are necessarily bad men, and systematically oppress the natives, till they can prove first that they are a different race from themselves—they believe it no doubt—but the two are drawn from the same class, and may be born of the same parents, and have, up to a certain point, the same education. If there have been black sheep among the Planters, there have been sheep with very dark fleeces among the Civilians. If the Planters have ever shown a lower tone of feeling it is because the miserable state of the law and the misgovernment of the country have prevented the best class of men from seeking employment where they are looked down upon by a bureaucratic class, and where there is no security of property. It rests wholly with the Government what class of men shall settle, and what shall be the tone of the settlers in India; but in the meanwhile the Planters may well feel proud of having gone through the ordeal to which they have lately been exposed, without their enemies being able to fix one single stain upon them, except such as may fairly be ascribed to the "System."

The Civil Service must also prove in the second place why the free settler should wish to oppress the native. Common sense would seem to point out that fair dealing and justice would be a far more certain way of attaining his ends than force

and fraud, and where his tenure over either his lands or his people is so slight and so precarious, it seems to be the only mode by which he can hold his own and beat his native rival. Even Civilians have admitted that whatever fault may be charged against the European settler, still the worst Planter is a better man and a fairer dealer than the best native. It stands to reason that it should be so. Except by his superior moral and intellectual qualities the European has no chance with the native of the soil, but by these he conquers and succeeds. Besides all this, the Civilian ought to recollect that all this reasoning applies with ten times more force to himself than it does to the Planter. Why should we employ Europeans to govern a country to which they are strangers, and to administer laws they necessarily cannot comprehend? If there is one single argument which can be adduced for the employment of Europeans in governing the country, that argument applies with ten times the force for the employment of Europeans in developing its resources. Turn it as you will, look at it from every side, it is quite certain that if it is indispensable that we must have Europeans to govern India—Europeans to defend it—it is as certain we must have Europeans to develop its resources. The argument is even stronger than this—natives have governed themselves and would like to do so again. The country has been held by natives, and properly handled: something might again be done in that line, but no native has any knowledge of European markets and of the exigencies of foreign commerce; they never travel, and they have not those habits of business which will enable them to meet the demand with sufficient steadiness, and their capital is too valuable among themselves to enable them to produce articles at such a price as so compete with other foreign countries. The fact is, of the three functions we have to perform in India, of governing, of guarding, and of developing its resources; the last is the most important and the one to which the other two are in reality subordinate. It is the one which requires European energy and skill, more even than the other two. With proper management we may dispense with the European element to a considerable extent in the two first; the third is however a

function for which Asiatics have never displayed any aptitude, and which can only be performed by Europeans. Let us try if by an example this can be made a little more clear. Any one who has passed in his boat through any of the rivers of the Delta will have observed a native indigo factory nestling among the trees on the one side of the river, and the staring factory of the European on the opposite bank, within a gun-shot of each other. The native cultivates his own land in his own villages—his coolies are his own servants—he buys the Planters' seed at half-price—he borrows his plant without paying—he has all the advantage of the skill and knowledge which Europeans have introduced into the various processes, and can bribe away the skilled labourer whom the European has educated. With all these advantages of course he ought to beat the Planter out of the field, but what is the case? The European indigo arrives in Calcutta in December, clean, dry, well-sorted and packed, in good marketable condition, it sells for say 200 rupees per maund. The native indigo arrives in January, wet and dirty, badly manufactured, ill-sorted, dishonestly packed—so unmarketable as rarely to be seen in European markets—it sells from 125 to 150 rupees per maund, and finds its way to the Gulphs or some native market where people are not particular, and if it were not for what he can steal, it would not pay the native to continue the manufacture. He can always make 25 to 50 per cent. for his money by usury; and so unbusinesslike is his mode of going to work, that with all his advantages, while the Planter is satisfied with his return, the native hardly finds it worth while to go on.

If we apply the same reasoning to Cotton, we shall find the same result. What is complained of in Manchester is not that Indian cotton is bad, but that it is unmerchantable, and the supply irregular. How can it be otherwise? Each ryot cultivates his own little patch under advances from the native usurer. When the cotton is ripe he gathers it, unless a native festival, or a marriage, or a death, or something else interferes; but as this happens oftener than not, it is gathered unripe, or after the pod is withered. It is taken home and thrown into a corner till the ryot has leisure to bow it. It is stuffed as it comes into

a gunny bag, and waits the Brinjaree with his bullocks. In due course he comes round, picks up 5 bales in one village, 10 in the next, and in course of time gathers as many bales as his bullocks can carry, and starts for the coast. There is no one to look after him, and he is in no hurry, and what with the delays in collecting and carrying, the chances are the rainy monsoon overtakes him, but if he escapes this, he lands in Bombay a dirty, ill-packed, ill-sorted, unmerchantable article, which sells in Liverpool for 4*d*, when American cotton of about the same quality sells for 6*d*.

Let us now fancy a European taking the trade in hand. The first thing he would do would be to select in some other province, the seed of the longest stapled, or the cotton best suited to his purposes, and arrange to receive annually his supplies from a distance. This is one of the secrets of the success of the Indigo cultivation; all the seed grown in the Upper Provinces is annually sent down to Bengal, and the greater part of the Bengallee seed sent to the Upper Provinces. Any European farmer will understand why this is done. To the natives it is even now a mystery. He sows the same cotton seed in the same cates, that is the lineal descendant of that sown there in the time of Alexander the Great, and we wonder that the produce is not equal to American! The European would take care that the weeding, hoeing and watering, were all attended to in their proper seasons. He would have a sufficient number of Coolies engaged when the time came, to ensure every pod being gathered as it ripened; another set would immediately gin, or bow it as soon as brought to the factory. When cleared of the seed it would be sorted into bins 1, 2, 3; and as soon as 300lbs. were collected in any one bin, it would be passed on to the screw house and made up ready for transport. He would, meanwhile, have made advances to some Brinjaree, who would in consequence be waiting in the factory, and within two weeks, instead of the native's two months, of the last pod being picked, the whole would have started for the coast under the charge of the factory churrandar, and would arrive long before the monsoon was thought of,—a clean, dry, well-sorted article, fit for any market, and might be bought and sold upon its brand. While native

cotton was selling at fourpence, this certainly would bring sixpence, the supply would be regular and the extent could only be limited by the demand. There are in the Presidency of Bombay and the neighbouring districts, lands once cultivated but now lying waste, sufficient to provide a million of bales in addition to the present supply; labour is abundant, and though native capital cannot be found for more than the present supply, and none would be employed unless the people made 20 or 30 or even 50 per cent, there is abundance of capital in Europe seeking employment, and which could be turned into this channel at an hour's notice. Were this done, the wealth and the revenue of the Presidency might be doubled in a few years, and we should be no longer dependent on America alone for a staple on which one-fifth of our population depend for existence.*

Why should not all this be done? The answer is only too easy. Because there is no law—no security for property in India. Before Europeans will risk their capital, they must be able to purchase the fee simple of the waste lands so as to secure themselves against the caprice of Government,† and they must have security for their advances, and not be at the mercy of any socialist Civilian who thinks himself called upon to redress the wrongs of labour at the expense of capital. It is of no use saying that the whole system of advancing is vicious and ought to be abolished—all that may be said against it may be quite true, but* nothing is done or ever was done in India without it. The Government in the olden time advanced for every bale of cotton or of piece goods they bought, for every pound of silk or sugar, or of any article that was purchased, and so it is now—the very Government of Bengal, which is making all this outcry

* The Bombay Civil Service have hitherto been entirely successful in resisting the settlement of Europeans in their Presidency. So far as is now known there is not one single English “interloper” domiciled in their preserve.

† Since the above was written, accounts have reached this country of Mr. Grant having refused—in spite of orders from home—to grant waste and forest lands for the cultivation of tea. According to his view of matters the Tiger and the Snake are far better tenants than his own hated countrymen, and have their vested rights that must not be interfered with.

about the Planter's advances, are at this moment forced to make advances for every chest of opium and every maund of salt they get, and they cannot inspire sufficient confidence to get on without practising what they abuse others so roundly for doing. After all, how can it well be otherwise? Why should the poor man trust the rich? The more powerful man has no other means of collecting his debts or enforcing his agreements, except by doing so himself, and what redress could the poor cultivator or labourer have against the great man. He knows he has none, and he insists on being paid before hand, rather than incur the certainty of not being paid at all, which among his own countrymen, at least, would certainly be the alternative. Besides this, though Mr. Grant insists, with a grim facetiousness, in calling the ryot the real capitalist of Bengal, he is too poor either to buy the necessary tools or to undertake any work, without having an advance which will enable him to relieve his present necessities, and enable him to see his way for a short time before him.

But will any man in his senses lend one brass farthing on such a security as advances now turn out to be? So far as at present can be judged, Mr. Grant's proceedings are final, as far as the introduction of fresh European capital into India is concerned. What capital is there may linger on till it can be withdrawn or is confiscated like that already gone; but none but a madman would ever think of risking either his money or his labour, where both are dependent on the breath of a bureaucrat who may annihilate the products of either in an hour.

What is passed is gone—it is of little use crying over spilled milk—the real, permanent, and it is feared immediate mischief that must arise from the recent raid is that it may prove a fatal blow to the introduction of European capital and skill into India, and so postpone her recovering from her present difficulties for an indefinite period—it may be for ever. For one thing seems certain, which is that it is only by a fresh influx of European capital and well-directed European energy that India can be saved from the frightful financial difficulties into which recent events have plunged her, and which up to this hour

is increasing and multiplying in every direction without one sign of alleviation from any quarter.

It never can be anything but a curse to India that she should go on year after year adding millions to a debt of which she cannot pay the interest, and which must eventually involve the Government and all who have trusted it in bankruptcy and ruin. It can barely suit the British people who have been already practically saddled with £100,000,000 of debt for India, in addition to their own present burdens, that this should go on increasing, while there is really no necessity of its doing so to the extent of one penny piece. India enjoys profound peace, and might be immensely prosperous was it not that a service which was reared in the cradle of the narrowest monopolies has in its old age turned over a new leaf and determined to govern the country according to the newest fangled doctrines of French socialism. Whatever may be said of these theories in other respects, it is admitted that they are enormously expensive, and in consequence have broken down in most European countries, and are consequently singularly unsuited to India at present.

We are a conscientious nation, and don't like to disturb an institution which has done good service in its day; but the Civil service of India is becoming so expensive a luxury that it is questionable whether we can afford to keep it up much longer. But we may take far higher grounds than such pecuniary considerations. If we are only to hold India as a conquered province by the strength of our organisation and the number of bayonets we can maintain within her shores; if we are to be in fact only a gigantic police to keep the peace among subjected races, the sooner we quit India the better. Such a system of government will never pay its own expenses, and it is besides an unjust and ungenerous use to make of the means which Providence has placed at our disposal.

If, on the other hand, we can so govern India as to develop her resources, to cultivate her waste lands, to increase the wealth of her people, to carry the example of European energy and the benefits of European civilization to every door, it is well worth our while to persevere even though we may be obliged eventually to abolish the boasted Civil service, in order to make

way for an army of free settlers who alone can effect these great objects.

It is not only by governing our Indian empire that we can hope good to come out of it. It must also be by guiding and helping the people that we can hope to develop her resources, and to make them both contented and prosperous; but in order to do that it is indispensable we should turn over a new leaf and discard the narrow class prejudices on which that country has hitherto been so frightfully misgoverned.

CONCLUSIONS.

The subject treated of in the preceding pages is so unfamiliar to the British public that it has been necessary to go into details which would not be required in addressing an Indian audience, and to use illustrations which might otherwise be deemed irrelevant. Although, therefore, it is drawn out to greater length than might be desirable, it is hoped that the following conclusions have been made tolerably clear.

1st. That there is no allegation in any of the indictments that any individual Planters, or any section of that body have committed the offences charged against them from any of the vicious motives that generally lead men to commit breaches of the law. No illegal or violent act has been committed from motives of revenge or cruelty, or in order to obtain anything which the Planter did not think, rightly or wrongly, that he had a good title, and to which he could not at least show a good usage title of thirty or forty years' standing.

2nd. Admitting that some of the acts of the Planters would be rightly deemed irregular and illegal under any settled or civilized Government, it is not proved that they were not such as were absolutely necessary for the protection of his property, living under a Government where the administration of justice is avowedly so imperfect and so corrupt as it is in Lower Bengal. The law affords him no protection, and he must either himself take measures to enforce the fulfilment of such agreements as in the prosecution of his business he may enter into,

or he must sit still to be robbed by every one he has dealings with.

3rd. A Government that either from connivance or incompetence has allowed a certain state of things to exist with its full knowledge and consent for more than half a century, has no right to turn suddenly round and inflict condign punishment on those who are only doing what they and their predecessors have always done before. No new fact is alleged or has come to light, except the universal acknowledgment that acts of violence and illegality have yearly become less and less usual, and that with moderate care and diligence on the part of the governing powers, they might soon be made to cease altogether.

4th. All the Planters ever asked for is a better and more complete administration of the law. It is no pleasure and no profit to them to be obliged to enforce their own bargains. What they ask for are, Courts of summary justice, where their contracts can be enforced against their defaulting clients. No one has asserted that any Planter ever refused to fulfil any contract he ever entered into, or to pay for what he took at the price his agreement showed he was bound to pay for it. The answer of the Government to this prayer has been to confiscate in the most outrageous manner the property of the petitioners, to excite a jacquerie of the most frightful character, and to spread ruin and devastation through the most prosperous and most peaceful provinces of the empire, so frightful that it is only kept from more excesses by the presence of a military force where no soldier was ever seen for such a purpose within the limits of this century at least.

5th. That these revolutionary measures on the part of the Government must either result in the total extinction of the most important branch of industry in Lower Bengal, or if it is now carried on at all, it must be at such an expense as to be ruinous to the Planter, and be equally disastrous to the ryot, whose share in the transaction is now absorbed in increased interest and charges, increased legal expenses, and the necessity of heavier establishment charges.

6th. Besides the destruction of local interests, the action of Government must be nearly fatal to the introduction of European settlers and European capital into India, and without this,

altogether about 8 rupees per month, whilst at the same time he had formal written engagements with the Ryots, under which, in consideration of their sowing one-sixteenth of the land they held from him in Indigo, the other 15-16ths were leased to them at moderate rents; and so satisfied was he, that all his people were well paid, remunerated, and contented, that he left for England in *March* 1860, to return in *September*, to find that not one could be got to work for him, and that all his Ryots refused to sow Indigo, or pay rents, but held on by all the lands.

In May 1859, Mr. Halliday, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, retired from India, and he was succeeded by Mr. John Peter Grant, of whom little was known by the public, except that he was a smart controversial writer, fond of discussions, but without practical knowledge, never having mixed much with any class, and having passed most of his official life in the Secretarial Bureau.

The Honourable Mr. Ashley Eden, was in 1859, Magistrate and Collector of Barraset, a station 14 miles distant from Calcutta, and in fact held supreme authority there. Mr. Eden was well known to be strongly opposed to Indigo planting, and to his countrymen as settlers, and both verbally and in writing he lost no opportunity of giving expression publicly and privately to these opinions, which he also repeated in his evidence before the Indigo Commission.

In the course of that year a discussion with Mr. Eden's official superiors arose, in consequence of some of his orders in connection with the Barraset Indigo concern, and which was pronounced upon in a letter from the Government of Bengal, dated 21st July 1859, in which Mr. Grant first evinced publicly his feeling against Indigo and Indigo Planters. Mr. Eden availed himself of the opportunity which the letter afforded him, of doing injury to Planters, by sending an extract from it, to a Native Deputy Magistrate under him, who, well aware of his superior's feelings, promptly followed it up by ordering his police, by beat of drum, to make a proclamation on the subject to the Indigo Ryots, which the Ryots were quite justified in understanding to be a declaration on the part of the Government that they might sow Indigo, *or not*, as they pleased, whatever might be their engagements; and which they of course took advantage of, *not* to sow, and at the same time not to repay the advances they had received. In a country without means of communication, such as Bengal is, it was sometime before news of these proceedings spread beyond Barraset, and in the meantime October sowings were everywhere completed, new agreements made, and

advances paid, for spring sowings in 1860, and throughout Kishnaghur, Pubna, Rajshahye, and Jessore every thing appeared much as usual.

In proof of this it may be stated, that in the month of December, 1859, Mr. Reid, the Acting Commissioner, or head authority of Kishnaghur, and the adjoining districts, marched slowly along the line of the New Eastern Bengal Railway, which runs right through the country which last year was most disturbed. He was in daily communication with the people as to the land that was being taken for the railway, as to the rights of road, floodways, &c. &c. Mr. Reid is known to be affable and accessible beyond most of his class. He went through the Katcheekata concern, the Manager of which had made agreements with the Ryots to sow 22000 begahs, half in October and half in spring. He congratulated the Manager on the flourishing appearance of the villages; on the beautiful and extended cultivation where there had formerly been so much jungle. At that time the 11000 Begahs of October had been sown without a complaint or murmur; of the remainder scarcely a begah was sown in March, though engaged for under precisely and identically the same terms and conditions, and the greatest difficulty was experienced in reaping and manufacturing the October plant.

In the course of February and March the knowledge of what had occurred at Barraset, and of the Lieutenant-Governor's opinions and views as to Indigo planting, gradually spread throughout the country, and all sorts of rumours as to the hostile feeling of Government to Planters were disseminated and believed, in the same way as false stories and reports were circulated and credited during the late rebellion. This was followed by extensive repudiation of engagements and refusal to sow, which led to the enactment of Act XI. of 1860, for the summary enforcement of Indigo contracts.

The Planters were at first unwilling to avail themselves of its provisions, for it was no advantage to them to put a Ryot in jail when they had expended large sums for seed, for establishment, and for buildings, which were lost and valueless without the plant which the Ryots had engaged to deliver, and they hoped that the fear of the punishment would induce them to cultivate as usual.

Led away, however, by evil designing men, who persuaded them that they had the countenance and support of Government, they almost universally refused to sow in Kishnaghur, though in Jessore, Pubna, and Rajshahye, they nearly as universally sowed as usual.

The difference was that in Jessore there was an energetic sensible magistrate, who had been sometime in the district, and who was well acquainted with the people.

To Kishnaghur a young man, Mr. Herschel, had just been sent, who had never been in that or in any other large Indigo district, having previously been only in a subordinate charge. He was no doubt conscientious and hard working, but from his nervous and excitable temperament and want of experience he was utterly unsuited for such a charge, as was proved by his proceedings in a previous case connected with Indigo planting, before he came to Kishnaghur, and in which he was strongly censured by the then Lieutenant-Governor. He lost his presence of mind when his tent was surrounded by a clamorous crowd of natives, and weakly ordered Mr. Forlong to withdraw, from fear of the consequences; he showed an animus against the Planters throughout, and the result was that Indigo cultivation was virtually destroyed in Kishnaghur.

The evidence and report of the Indigo Commission show how hundreds of Ryots swore that they never had received advances, and had never entered into engagements to cultivate Indigo, and thousands and thousands more were ready to swear the same. They all declared that they believed that Government wished to put a stop to Indigo cultivation, and in all the proclamations by Government and the officials existing contracts were ignored, and the Ryots were warranted in interpreting them as they did, that they need not sow unless they liked.

The Petition of the Association to the Governor-General, dated 26th July, 1860, and the subsequent correspondence, fully set forth all the complaints of the Planters as regards the Lieutenant-Governor's interference with the course of justice, and as to his measures generally tending to destroy the independence of the officials under him. It is not necessary to go over the same ground again, and it will be sufficient to sketch the position of the Planters since the close of last season in September, and their prospects for the future.

The Report of the majority of the Indigo Commission recommended that the Act for the summary enforcement of Indigo contracts should *not* be renewed. They considered that no general law of contract was necessary—that there should be no special agency to endeavour to reconcile the ignorant and credulous Ryot with the Planter, and that the latter should be left to the Civil Courts for the recovery of his claims.

The only other recommendation was that the police and magisterial force should be increased, which has been attended

to, the Lieutenant-Governor having sent large bodies of police and military into those hitherto quiet districts, though not a single instance of violence or oppression had been substantiated against the Planters during this trying period.

Of course the Ryots looked upon this as a complete triumph ; they believed that Government really wished to expel the Planters from the country ; they forcibly seized the land, the absolute property of the Planters, and which had been in their possession for years. The Ryots sowed it down in October with their own crops. The servants of the Planters were intimidated, driven away, threatened with excommunication, if they continued in their employments, and ordinary supplies of milk, fuel, and food were refused to be sold to them, at any price, in the common and public markets.

No one dared to give evidence in favour of a Planter, and the only remedy he had was a suit for repossession of his own land, under Act IV. of 1840, which was framed for the purpose of enabling a magistrate to keep in possession of land any one who had previously been so, pending the progress of a civil suit, as to the right of property. The proceedings under this Act were intended to be summary, and ought to be confined to an inquiry into the simple fact of previous possession, but they are too frequently delayed by the magistrate requiring the production of title deeds, and latterly also by the number of the Ryots who came forward as witnesses to swear that the land had never been in the possession of the Planter, though in some cases the stumps of the Indigo plant were still in the ground, and the land had been sown with Indigo by the Factory for 15 or 20 years.

A large quantity of the ground so appropriated has been recovered, though to little good purpose as regards this season, for in many instances it was too late for October sowings, even if servants and people could be found to cultivate it.

There seems little prospect of matters being better for spring sowings, unless Government take some prompt and decided line of action, and this does not appear likely ; for though the Governor-General in Council, under date 25th September, promised the establishment of Summary Civil Courts within the reach of every Planter and Ryot, and a system of cheap and easy Registration of Contracts—no steps have been taken by the Bengal Government to carry out these measures—which if fairly put in force and worked, would tend much to improve the position of the Planters.

At present Ryots firmly believe that they are acting in accordance with the wishes and views of Government.

The Magistrates and Officials seem to believe the same, and

seem to wish to be free of all European settlers, so that the Planter almost alone and single-handed—one among hundreds of thousands—has every disadvantage to struggle against, and is endeavouring to hold his own as he best may.

Virtually, for the present, Indigo planting is at an end in Kishnaghur, Jessore, Pubna, Rajshahye, and Furreedpore; the whole of the enormous balances due by Ryots to Planters are confiscated, as it were, by order of Government; for in no case has any Ryot offered to come in and settle his account by paying up, and it will be fortunate indeed if other interests do not equally suffer.

The Ryots have meanwhile taken one step further in advance by the general refusal to pay rent, especially where they have been successful in repudiating their Indigo liabilities. But as this must be followed by the inability of the Zemindars to pay the Land Revenue, it will scarcely suit Government to permit it, and this will probably be put down. Indeed, Mr. Herschel, the Magistrate and Collector of Kishnaghur, publicly said to a number of Ryots who came in: “Because you have escaped from Indigo you expect to escape from Rents—this is a matter of Government and will not be permitted.”

It is the prevalent impression that the movement against Indigo has been promoted by that jealous dislike of European settlers, which from the earliest times characterized the policy of the East India Company, and appears still to pervade all those of the Civil Service nominated by that body.

It is this feeling which continues to throw obstacles in the way of waste and other land being sold in fee simple; and if Indigo alone has hitherto suffered, it is because Indigo is the largest and most prominent interest in this part of India.

Silk, cotton, tea, &c. &c. are all in the same category, and may all meet with the same treatment.

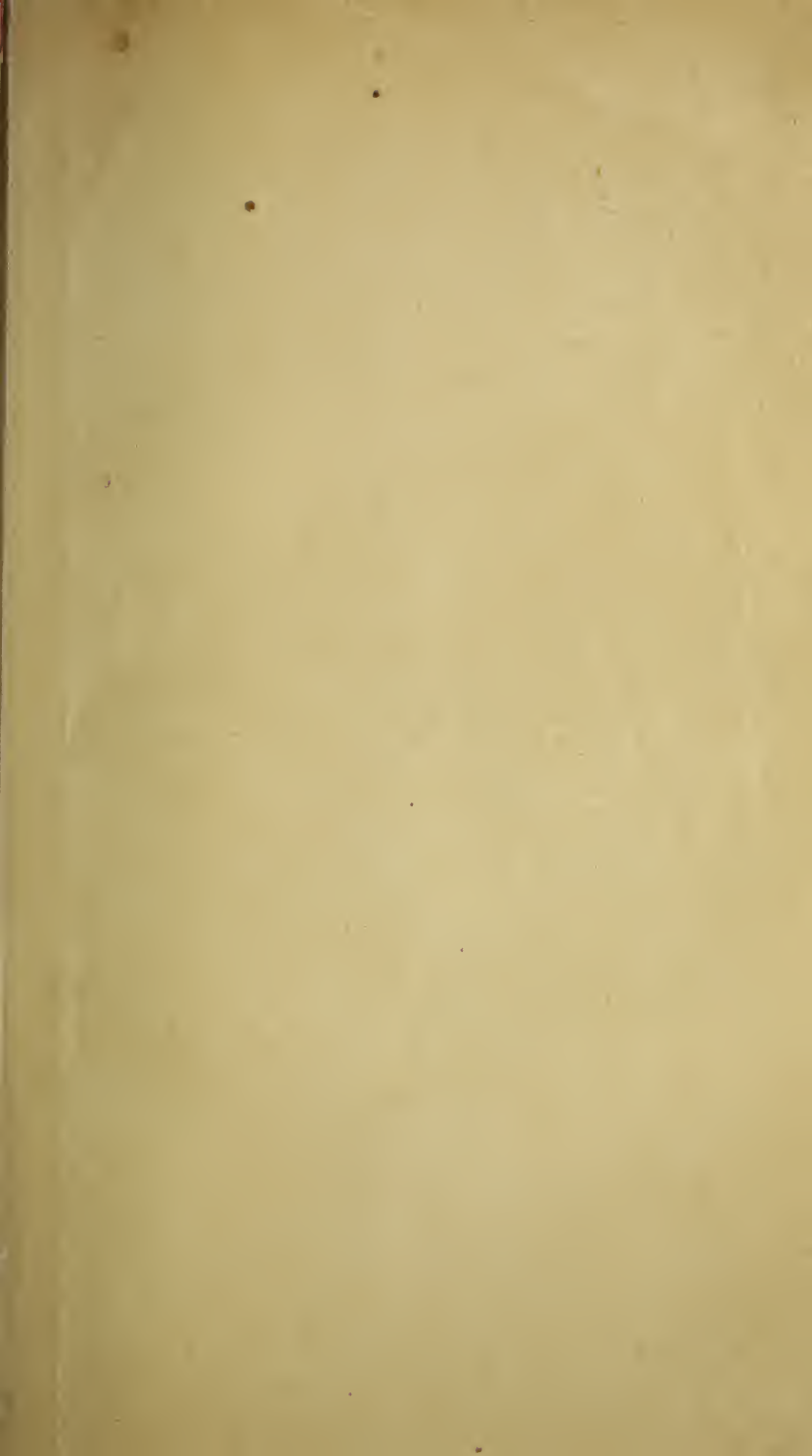
It is in the hope that this may yet be prevented,—that some security may be obtained, and English interests not left at the mercy of a short-sighted and unwise policy, that the foregoing statement is drawn up.

By Order of the Central Committee of the Indigo Planters' Association.

W. F. FERGUSSON,

Secretary.

Calcutta, December 8, 1860.



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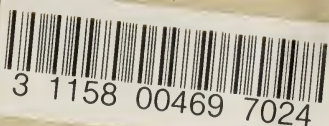
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